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A PAMPHLET AGAINST ANTHOLOGIES

A Pamphlet

AGAINST ANTHOLOGIES

by

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AND ROBERT GRAVES

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At the beginning of a previous work, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, we carefully described it as a word-by-word collaboration. We did this because it was obvious to us that the vulgarity of a certain type of English reviewer would be encouraged by the combined circumstances that the first author was a woman and that the second was a man whose name was perhaps better known to him than that of the first; and because we were interested to see how far this vulgarity would persist in spite of our statement.

We therefore take a statistical pleasure in listing the following papers which succumbed, through their reviewers, to this vulgarity:

1. *The Glasgow Herald*, which in one notice referred to the book as 'Mr. Graves' book'; in another, thought it proper 'to give predominance to the male partner.'

2. *The South Wales Argus*, which also simplified the discussion by referring to the book as 'Mr. Graves' book.'

3. *The Guardian*, the same.

4. *The Nottingham Journal*, which broke down after the formal opening sentence.

5. *The Liverpool Post*, which, 'to be chivalrous,' decided that it must 'lay the blame on the masculine author.'

6. *The Gownsman* (the Cambridge undergraduate paper), which displayed a personal vulgarity possible only to adolescence and Cambridge united.

7. *The Oxford Magazine*, a donnish fortnightly, which, in contrast with the more representative Oxford undergraduate weeklies, followed the provincial example.

Shall we add, in anticipation of fresh statistical material, that this is also a word-by-word collaboration?

THE AUTHORS.

A PAMPHLET AGAINST ANTHOLOGIES

Chapter I

THE TRUE ANTHOLOGY AND THE TRADE ANTHOLOGY

In every language and at all periods, loose poems or fragments of poems are found that cannot be formally classified among the collected works of any known author, or bound up with other anonymous material forming an historical unit for which a legendary author has been invented; or yet, because of their character and number, be given each the distinction of separate publication. Popular ballads, unless forming part of a single cycle, epigrams, epitaphs, squibs, stray lyrics and even longer poems that have irretrievably lost author and date, may be fittingly united in a volume of non-classifiable verse; and this is always a legitimate use of the anthology.

The anthology of the days before cheap books were printed was justified as a secure portfolio for short poems that might otherwise have been lost: short poems in confederacy being as safe from loss as a drama or epic equalling their combined length. When at the beginning of the first century before Christ Meleager compiled his *Crown* of epigram-

matic verse as a gift for one Diocles, 'weaving in the lilies of Anyte, the scarlet gopher of Antipater, the narcissus of Melanippides, the aromatic rush of Perseus, the young vine-branch of Simonides,' and so on, he was doing a service both to Diocles and to the poems, which were fugitive pieces not obtainable at every public library or copying-school. Further, this compilation was made without prejudice to the longer poems by the authors represented in the anthology, or by other authors, which Diocles might obtain in manuscripts of formal length. Meleager added epigrams of his own to the *Crown*, but none written by any contemporary except those of his famous neighbour Antipater, and these probably for friendship's sake only; the poems of other contemporaries were left to their own fate. The *Crown* was an anthology in the sense that A. H. Bullen's *Lyrics from the Elizabethan Song Books* is an anthology: it was a collection of flowers, but from remote or not readily accessible gardens. But Meleager was a poet exercising an independent personal taste, Bullen a literary connoisseur. Although Diocles was informed at the end of the 'proem' that the garland was not merely a personal gift to him but a common gift to all lovers of poetry, this was rather a rhetorical flourish than an acknowledgment of responsibility to a poetry-consuming public, such as Bullen must have felt.

Diocles circulated the manuscript: it was copied and much admired. A hundred years later one

Philippus added to it and brought it up to date, establishing it as a Classic, an authoritative collection of short poems of a certain character. Where Meleager had sensibly used a mere alphabetical arrangement of first lines, Philippus set the bad example to posterity of arranging the poems in subject-categories. By the time of the Antonines the use of anthologies seems to have been widespread; for instance, in the grave of a legionary of that period, in Egypt, a collection of regimental marching songs has been found. In the reign of the Emperor Justinian appeared Agathias, with the sinister surname 'Scholasticus,' the first thoroughgoing example of what we may call the trade-anthologist. He made a collection of new epigrams modelled on the revised *Crown*, now more than a Classic, a required text-book: which signalled the end of the anthology as a casual portfolio of poems. It began with a servile panegyric of the Emperor, followed Philippus' vicious system of classification and included many contemporary exercises in the style of the early poems, even pseudo-dedicatory epigrams to the long-superseded Greek Gods. Agathias' anthology became a popular reciter for use in the intervals between the courses of banquets, and at the same time a '*Models for Verse-writers*'; for Classical Greek was now a merely literary language and any verse-writing for an occasion amatory, funerary or convivial looked to the Anthology for authority.

Yet Philippus and even Agathias did not find it necessary to give an appearance of 'solidity' to their collections by slipping in, say, three or four nicely rounded incidents from the *Odyssey* or *Iliad*, a selected Homeric hymn, a seasonal excerpt from Hesiod, a messenger's speech of Æschylus's, a neat piece of stichomythia from Sophocles, a couple of Euripidean choruses, three odes of Pindar's, major poems by Sappho and Alcæus; perhaps also the 'funeral speech of Pericles' or a purple patch from one of Demosthenes' *Philippics*, with an editorial comment: 'Though written in prose this may also be accounted great poetry.' The anthology, though it had degenerated into a text-book of occasional lyrics, had not yet turned into the second-hand clothes shop of poetry.

What has been said about the Greek anthologies applies nearly enough to the English ones. There have been portfolio anthologies of verse from the beginning of English literature: such as ninth- and tenth-century anthologies of charms and riddles, fourteenth-century anthologies of carols and lyrics and the famous 'Percy folio' of ballads – all of these, however, private manuscript collections not multiplied at the copyist-schools: the trade anthology only developed with the advance of printing. Tottel's *Miscellany* of 1557 has at first sight much to recommend it. Tottel, a bookseller, collected the fugitive verses of court-poets of the elder generation, most of

them dead, which might otherwise have been lost: they were poems which, written in the then new Italianate style, had been intended merely for manuscript circulation in the limited world of the travelled nobility. But the *Miscellany* went into eight editions in thirty years, its subscribers being clearly the country relations and wealthy would-be neighbours of this fashionable poetry-reading society; and then became a Classic and a model for such later Elizabethan trade-anthologies as *England's Helicon*, first published in 1600, which claimed to be a standard collection of contemporary lyrics, only a few of which, however, had not appeared in the authors' printed works. These 'Galleries,' 'Gardens,' 'Paradises' and 'Pageants,' containing only poems in the courtly convention, are comparable with Agathias' collection: they consisted of 'occasional' verse of an amatory and exhibitory kind for people with social ambitions whose taste in verse stood in need of education and refinement. A variation from these was the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, published in 1576, an anthology collected by a printer named Disle, which traded not in the courtier-market but in the morality-market. Love and Honour are replaced by graver and more didactic themes – 'Think to Die,' 'Our Pleasures are Vanities,' 'Promise is Debt'; it also included a set of pieces appropriate to Holy Days, and a translation from St. Bernard of Morlaix. *Belvedere, or the Garden of the Muses*, printed at the

same time and by the same publishers as *England's Helicon* is, to quote A. H. Bullen, 'a collection of scrappy poetical quotations seldom exceeding a couplet in length,' anticipating, though not effectively enough to do much harm, the 'Beauties' of the late eighteenth century. But for the most part the anthology of this period kept strictly to short complete poems of the same general character: there were no lopped-off branches of the *Faerie Queene* smuggled in, no speeches from *Tamerlaine*, *Gorboduc*, or the *Faithful Shepherdess*. Nor were Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate and Skelton applied to for subsidies, or a section of popular balladry added, with an apologetic:

'Rude Rhymers though they be,
They boast a native wit:
And in these gorgeous gardens may
Like nimble footmen flit.'

Such omissions, however, were chiefly due to the up-to-dateness of the anthologists, who prided themselves on their modernity, above everything; a generation after the first publication of Tottel's *Miscellany*, which was a collection of real poems, the anthology was fast becoming a mere fashion parade. The following lines introduced Proctor's *Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, 1578:

'See, Gallants, see the Gallery of Delights
With buildings brave, imbost with various hue,

With dainties decked devised of various wights,
Which as time served unto proportion grew.
By studies toiled with phrases fine they fraught
This peerless piece filled full of pretty pith.'

The monotony of these collections led in the seventeenth century to the publication of various anthologies of *Wit and Drollery*; they were intended for the same reading public, which had, however, acquired through the theatres a literary interest in low life and clowning.

Tottel's *Miscellany* and Meleager's *Wreath* both had the advantage of being the first of their line: they thus contained no poem written for an anthology public, since such a public could only be created by their anthologies. Meleager's excellence, however, is more than an accident of date; he had no trade purposes and, moreover, a love of the poem itself. Tottel, on the other hand, gets his title as the father of the English Anthology (Dr. Johnson called him the Mæcenas of the times) from an accident of date, not at all from the purity of his interest. Indeed, his scandalous rewriting of many of the poems that he included proves that but for this accident he would have been only another worse Agathias. It was his eight editions that stimulated anthology competition and created the eventual confusion between true anthologies, that confine themselves to literary rescue-work or have some excuse

as works of criticism, or as private albums, and are not numerous, and the all too numerous trade-anthologies that turn poetry into an industrial packet-commodity.

A. H. Bullen's *Lyrics from the Elizabethan Song-books* is a ready example of a modern true-anthology, fully justified because the song-books themselves are very hard to come at and the specimens rescued are obviously representative. *Lyrics from the Elizabethan Dramatists* may also be included in this category, though the dramatists are more accessible than the song-books and the lyric is sometimes too closely related to the play to make its transplanting to an anthology congruous. Another good example of the unexceptionable collection is Professor Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*, which is accurate, definite and well-organized: it keeps within certain carefully explained limits and, within these, arranges poems that not only are otherwise inaccessible but gain by a collation of their widely scattered variants.

Among the less ambitious volumes of the same class is a collection of songs home-made in the trenches during the War and edited under the title of *Sing-Songs of the War* by a young airman, Flight-Lieutenant Nettleship. Professor Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Frontier Ballads* is another worthy collection. But in general a great risk is undertaken in anthologizing raw material of this kind, especially where it is in ballad form, as in recent collections of

hobo and negro songs: the folk music accompanying such ballads is a temptation to formalize and sentimentalize them for popular rendering. *Water Boy, Where are you hiding*? for example, one of the most tragic and humble plantation songs, is now delivered from concert platforms with piano accompaniment as a cultivated, ambitious darkey piece.

Indeed, any field where modifications in the original texts are necessary for popular rendering, more specifically where definite translations are necessary, should be avoided by anthologists. It may be stated as a general rule that an anthology of translations, whatever the merits of the translation, is unlikely to be justifiable as an anthology. This would be true of translations from American Indian poetry in anthology form, or, in fact, of translations from any primitive poetry, where poetry is not an independent creative act capable of being separated from its background, but part of a tribal ritual in which it has a meaning foreign to the authorship-principle of modern popular-anthology verse. The proper place for poetry of this kind is in an appendix to an encyclopædia of ethnology. This does not mean that such anthologies have not been made which are competent from the literary point of view, as in the recent translations by Miss Eda Lou Walton from the Navajo: but whatever their literary merits, they involve a confusion of communal and individualistic poetry. This confusion is marked in a volume like

C. Elissa Sharply's *Anthology of Ancient Egyptian Poems*, which is part of a 'Wisdom of the East' series designed to promote good-will and understanding between East and West – 'the old world of Thought and the new of Action.' Such a sweeping historical generalization about the East – and Egypt is not, of course, the East – does not allow for literary differentiation; and we are therefore not surprised to find bardic battle-pieces and personal love-songs interspersed with ancient religious hymns and extracts from the *Book of the Dead*. The same confusion is even present to a certain degree in anthologies meant to invite wider scholastic research in the original language, like Dr. Kuno Meyer's *Ancient Irish Poetry*.

Modern anthologies of foreign poetry fall into two classes. They can be either anthologies in which the incorporated material is left untranslated, such as the *Oxford Books* of German, French, Italian and Portuguese Verse: in which case they merely imitate the vices of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, of which we shall treat ater: or they can be material both selected and translated by a single hand, such as the Deutsch-Yarmolinski translations from the German and Russian: in which case the incorporated material is even more deeply dyed than usual in the anthologist's vat and more unrecognizably recut in the anthology fashion of the language into which it is translated. It is significant that when a representative anthology of a foreign poetry is to be compiled

a current native anthology is almost never taken over and translated, but an entirely new selection made of poems that do not so much represent the poetry of the language from which they are taken as the taste of the public for whose benefit they are translated. This reveals a principle that governs not only translation-anthologies but anthologies in general.

A distich recently found scrawled on the door of a flat in the London suburbs suggests the casual nature of a true anthology piece:

> 'Brother Tradesmen, do not weep!
> They are not dead, they do but sleep.'

The signature was 'Hawes' Brothers' Boy.' There must be scores of similar pieces waiting for a place in a portfolio: election lampoons, parodies of popular advertisements, anticipatory epitaphs of public figures, anonymous album verse, barrack-room ballads not by Mr. Kipling, and so on. For example, the following epigram appeared in a Base Camp magazine in France in May, 1915:

On a Second Lieutenant whose Promotion was Slow.

> 'O deem it pride, not lack of skill,
> That will not let my sleeves increase.
> The morning and the evening still
> Have but one star apiece.'

Mr. Rostrevor's recent anthology of *Modern Epigrams* should, we feel, have consisted solely of

pieces of this character instead of the studied literary compositions of Messrs. Belloc, Squire and others which can readily be found among their Collected Poems. It would be proper to include epigrams like:

'Because the Duke of York is Duke of York
The Duke of York has shot a huge Rhinoceros,
Let's hope the Prince of Wales will take a walk
In Africa and make the Empire talk
By shooting an enormous Hippopotamus,
And let us hope that Lord Lascelles
Will shoot all beasts from gryphons to gazelles
And show the world what sterling stuff we've got
in us' –

which the author, a distinguished poet, has omitted from his *Satirical Poems* because of its fugitive character; or Tennyson's summary of the Rosebery-Rothschild wedding, composed for a wager and not to be found in his Collected Poems:

'Venus, Sea-froth's child,
Playing "old gooseberry,"
Married Earl Rosebery
To Hannah de Rothschild';

or the playful lines on Swift attributed to Pope:

'Jonathan Swift
Had the gift
By fatherage,
Motherage,

Cousinage,
And by brotherage,
To come from Gutheridge.'

These have that fugitive character which makes them every one's concern but the writer's. It is different from the character that real poems get from being over-anthologized and from that of poems written especially for the trade anthology. The modern fugitive epigram is merely a manifestation of that folk-spirit which has been forced to accommodate itself to the urbanization of wit.

One of the reasons for the growing scarcity of the true anthology is that once a field has been covered well, as Child covered the popular non-literary English and Scottish ballad, as W. Carew Hazlitt in his four-volume *Early English Popular Poetry* and his two-volume *Early Popular Scotch Poetry* covered the black-letter verse fabliau, as Chappell covered the fields of early popular song in his *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, and as Dr. Milton Percival has done for the political ballads satirizing the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, in his *Walpole Ballads*, there is nothing left to do but to cross the t's and dot the i's of these extremely conscientious antiquarians and look for remoter fields of research. But there are not enough remote fields of research to go round, and the temptation to make a popular and uncritical compôte of these scholary collections is very strong.

And once the research spirit is in abeyance, the conscientious observance of the original texts of fugitive pieces – a morality by the way which first hardened only so late as 1822 with David Laing's *Select Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of Scotland* – is relaxed: and in nine cases out of ten the reconstituted poems, instead of recovering a clarity lost by the carelessness of the original scribe or printer, are further mishandled.

Our definition then of the true anthology has fallen into two classes. First, a strictly non-professional, non-purposive collection, such as the poet's or amateur's scrap-book (the Commonplace Book kept by Woodhouse, the friend of Keats, is a good example). The virtue of such an anthology diminishes with the increase in the number of persons for whom it is made; best if for only one, the private anthologist himself, next best if for only two, as if Meleager had not intended his *Crown* to go further than Diocles, and so on, the bigger the circle of readers, the worse, proportionately, the anthology. Second, the rescue-anthology, the value of which is primarily historical, only incidentally (and not necessarily) sympathetic. Such an anthology may be textual in emphasis, as Hazlitt's *Early English Popular Poetry*, or historical, as a compendium of all the political verse of any obvious period, for example the French Revolution. Its object whether textual or historical will be to include as much material as

possible, that is, it is committed in this sense to be uncritical; as the first class is also uncritical in the sense that it has only a personal standard. There remains a possible third class of the true anthology – the anthology that is criticism. But a book of criticism could be only incidentally an anthology: an anthology implies a work of pure collection and display. In a critical anthology a conflict is bound to occur between the critical element and the anthologistic element. And the pervasiveness of the popular anthology spirit will as a rule defeat what real critical intentions the author may have had. Roughly speaking, then, the true anthology is one that is in no way likely to become a popular trade anthology, since the general reading public asks from anthologies neither unauthorative examples of private taste, nor historical material in the raw, nor criticism.

Chapter II

ANTHOLOGIES AND THE BOOK MARKET

Of all forms of the trade anthology, the anthology, that is, which treats poetry as a commodity destined for instructional, narcotic, patriotic, religious, humorous and other household uses, the modern publisher's anthology is the most offensive. It comes about something in this fashion. A superstition has hung over from last century when there was, indeed, a practical demand for poetry for household uses, that no general publisher's Spring or Autumn list is complete without at least one volume under the heading of '*Poetry*.' What it is does not matter, so long as it does not run the firm into expense. And the publisher knows well enough that poetry cannot pay its printer's bills except in the form of standard text-books, nursery verse and anthologies. But poetry text-books, unlike scientific text-books, take at least twenty-five years to go out of date. Their market is very close, and made still closer by duplication of texts in America and England, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of English Poetry* serving as the chief text-book in the secondary schools in both countries,

and gems from American poetry – from Whittier, Longfellow, Lowell, Eugene Field (with the addition of Mrs. Hemans and Tennyson, of course, on both sides) – providing the chief material for the elementary primer in both. The American market is somewhat more open than the English because of fancy, up-to-the-minute literary courses in the American university curriculum and the *From Whitman to Sandburg* text-books compiled to supply them; in England, recent poetry is considered too recent to be made an advanced academic subject.[1] As for nursery verse, it must appear in the publisher's list under the heading *Juvenile* if it is to pay for itself. So *Poetry* must again be represented by an anthology this season, the publisher decides.

He runs over the possibilities in his mind. '*Flower Poems*? No, that has been done often, illustrated and plain. *Animal Poems*? Two animal anthologies already this year. *Poems of the Sea*? I might get most of it from Mrs. Sharpe's *Sea Music* and slip in a few moderns. But the Sea is going out of fashion since the Air came in; and there is no Air-Poetry to take its place yet.[2] If I could only hit

[1] The present Professor of Poetry at Oxford, diving gamely into the waters of modernism, brought up only an old boot—Mr. Humbert Wolfe!

[2] A *Homage to Lindbergh* anthology, contributed to by some two hundred poets, has however recently been published.

on something like Mr. Hartog's *The Kiss in Poetry*. Perhaps *The Life of Christ, an Anthology*? One of the later Oxford books, I'm afraid. *Child Poems*? *Lullabies*? *Drinking Songs*? *Songs of the Homeland*? *Book of the Tree*? *Book of the Inn*? . . . Can it be that all poems have been anthologized? Then we must dig up the suppressed ones. . . . Ah, an *Anthology of Suppressed Poems*! A quaint Christmas present for the book-lover. About 200 pp. octavo in limp leather and with a short introduction by Mr. Squire / Mr. Morley or Mr. Chesterton / Mr. Mencken. Office Boy! Rush this through!'

These publisher's anthologies take many grotesque forms. The arrangement may be one of subject; or of period; or of verse-form, such as *An Anthology of Sonnets* and *A Treasury of Modern Triolets*; or of locale, such as *Manchester Poets* and *The Chicago Lyre*; or of competitive anthology quality, *The Hundred Best Lyrics*, *The Best Poems of Our Time*, and, latterly, *The Second Hundred Best Poems*. All these collections are mere wanton re-arrangement of poetry that has its proper place elsewhere, or nowhere at all; as wanton as if the British Museum were suddenly to change its library system and classify its books according to the colour of their bindings.

Such an anthology-making resembles the tricks that the Victorians used to play with the Bible. They

collected instances of the occurrence of odd words such as 'razor' and 'satyr' and 'dragon,' and collated curses and references to the End of the World, and compiled 'Biblical Flora' collections and 'Examples of God's Mercy,' and so passed many a weary Sunday afternoon; until some thorough-going spoil-sport published a *Complete and Trustworthy Concordance*, and the game was over; there were no surprises left. Then they gave it up and read improving scientific books instead on their Sunday afternoons; and so the period of Doubt began. Only the Old Couple remained undefeated. He set himself to tabulate the number of '*Ands*' in the Old Testament, and persuaded her to count the '*Ands*' in the New Testament. *And* they got the answer *and* each checked the other's addition; *and* then they did the *Apocrypha*, book by book, but when they came to *Bel and the Dragon* he died *and* she from a sense of Christian duty finished *and* the grand total, whatever it was, ended in the figures 666, which she thought was unlucky; *and* she was so glad when she checked it to discover that she had overlooked two more marginal '*Ands*,' which made it quite all right. *And* . . . *But* by this time Science has invented so many new tabulating games that, though the *flowers* and the *kisses* and the *animals* and the *mysticism* and the *patriotism* and the *alcoholism* have all been used up as far as 666 and beyond, a whole new tabulating-system will soon have been evolved, and we shall

be having anthologies of *Vitamine E. Poems*, *Poems of Television*, *Death-Ray Poems*, and so forth.

Among other ways, the publisher's anthology has varied itself by specializing in publics. In some cases the publisher even allows the public to make its own collection; he, of course, always standing as godfather. School anthologies, for instance, are chiefly compiled in the class-room by and for schoolmasters who like poems that can be readily parsed, recited, and 'got up' with historical notes, that are idealistic in sentiment and that tell a story. Other random examples of the anthology specializing in a public are Canon Langbridge's *Ballads of the Brave*, gallant poems for private reading by English boys of the Mafeking tradition; and *The Open Road* of Mr. E. V. Lucas (verse with prose-insertions), a small book for the pocket to ease the sentimental rambler on a walking tour when, shortly after the ninth milestone, conversation breaks down between him and his companion. This last, though accepted as a 'modern classic,' smells suspiciously of the publisher's seasonal happy thought, his *Bus-top Treasury*, his *Poems for Convalescence* and his *Business Girl's Garland of Verse*.[1]

Even Dr. Bridges' *Spirit of Man* must be classed as a trade anthology, if not as a publisher's anthology, For though the gross commercial view was prob-

[1] The recent *Sacco-Vanzetti* anthology illustrates how very special the anthology public may be.

ably absent from his mind, it was at any rate a public utility volume compiled for a national occasion. It came out in the middle of the War and was dedicated to 'His Majesty the King, by His Poet Laureate.' The preface makes rather sad reading now, when it informs us: 'Prussia's scheme for the destruction of her neighbours was, above all question and debate, long laid and scientifically elaborated to the smallest detail'; and when it suggests that Englishmen should 'turn to seek comfort in the contemplation of spiritual things . . . happy even in the death of our beloved who fell in the fight. They die nobly as saints and heroes, with hearts and hands unstained by hatred or wrong,' and that they should find 'joy in the thought that our Country is called of God to stand for the truth of man's hope and that it has not shrunk from the call.' To support such sentiments, the ghosts of the Elizabethans and the Romantic Revivalists are summoned to present their usual verse-offerings; but because of the seriousness of the occasion, the reader is asked 'to bathe rather than fish in these waters.'

* * * * *

In 1777 the Martins of Edinburgh began to print a series of *The Poets*. The London booksellers, alarmed at 'the invasion of what we call our Literary Property,' and probably also influenced by the prevailing encyclopedia movement, determined, with Dr. Johnson as editor, 'to print an elegant and

accurate edition of all the English Poets of reputation from Chaucer to the present time.' Forty of the most select booksellers met together, pooled their copyrights and got on with the printing: but on a less ambitious plan than first intended, for they decided that the English Poets began with Abraham Cowley. However, in 1810, Chalmers' edition added the earlier poets; and English Literature was at last provided with a *Library* or *Corpus* of Poets. True, it printed Warner's *Albion's England*, Drayton's *Polyolbion*, Daniel's *History of the Civil War* at full length, yet left out Shakespeare's and Marlowe's dramas; it included Ambrose and J. Philips, Watts, Dodsley, Tickell, Mickle, Smith, Jones and Sprat, yet omitted Blake, Crashaw, Campion, Traherne, Vaughan, Marvell; it printed almost all of Smart – except his *Song to David*. But it was a Corpus, the best that the booksellers could command. The general public looked with pride not unmixed with dismay on this new acquisition. It was an impressive shelf-full, but was one really expected to read it all through? If so, did one have to start at the beginning, go on till one came to the end and then stop? The print too, they pleaded, was rather small. So some charitable gentlemen, friends of the booksellers, came to their help with further *Beauties of the Poets* on the model of the guides to previous less complete collections.

Shortly after the publication of Chalmers' edition

the great poetry boom began. Not only were the Elder Poets securely indexed in Chalmers crying out to have their 'Beauties' exhumed for contemporary curiosity, but there were exciting Moderns, too – the handsome, wicked, heroic Lord Byron, the romantic 'Waverley' Scott, clever Mr. Coleridge and shy Mr. Wordsworth, and Mr. Leigh Hunt and young Mr. . . er . . . . Shelley ('that custody case, you know') and dignified Mr. Samuel Rogers. 'Let us have "Modern Beauties" too.' So they had them. Then the fashion arose of putting ancient and recent side by side in manuscript albums, the recent for pleasure, the ancient to counteract the pleasure – this was a period with a growing conscience about pleasure.

The keeping of these private albums of poems that had made a particular personal appeal to the reader, each poem copied out in the reader's own hand, began as a disinterested hobby; and indeed there are people who still continue the custom with pure enough motives. But the tendency to let the album lose its private character, by handing it about among friends and allowing it to come into competition with other albums, soon destroyed the integrity of album-making. The actual personal appeal became confused with the fashionable appeal. Because there was a sentimental cult for Chatterton, or because the elder critics agreed in accepting Shenstone as one of the Masters, or because Mr. Lamb

and Mr. Hazlitt maintained that the Elizabethan Age, even without Shakespeare, had been quite as important an age of poetry as the Augustan, the private anthologist was so busy mechanically copying out page after page of verse that he had no energy left for enjoying it.

Now, the private anthology which grows directly out of serious reading can be valuable to its compiler. It resembles, at its best, creation. A poem particularly chosen and copied down in the reader's handwriting becomes in a sense his own; it is the nearest that a person who is not a poet can get to writing poetry. But a private anthology is only permissible if it remains private. Mr. Robert Lynd, in introducing Sir Algernon Methuen's *Shakespeare to Hardy* anthology, quotes 'a young poet of our own time' as testifying warmly to the therapeutic value of a good anthology for sick and disordered minds, and asks Sir Algernon Methuen and every other good anthologist to 'glow with pleasure at so startling a tribute to their usefulness.' But the possible medicinal value of an anthology for sick and disordered minds lies solely in the work which the sick and disordered mind does for itself if it compiles this anthology. And though it is possible to imagine an ideal anthology free of all the faults to which we are calling attention, it must remain ideal. Even an honest private anthology loses most of its value when published as a public anthology. The poems in-

cluded have become part of the anthologist and have lost their original context. This does not harm the anthologist, but it makes him a bar between the readers of the anthology and the poem and thus prevents a direct introduction to the poem *by the poet himself*, who alone has the right to give it. Mr. Walter De la Mare's anthology *Come Hither* is an extreme case. The poems included are so honestly Mr. De la Mare's favourite poems that they seem a mere extension of the De la Mare atmosphere backwards through English Poetry. A tyranny which no personality has a right to exercise over the reader; Bryant and Whittier, though their personalities were less fantastic, made typical poets'-anthologies which were open to the same objections.

No matter, then, in what good faith a private anthology is made, it becomes, when published, an organized theft of the signatures of the original poets, for it is the whole intention of a private anthology to make the included poems the anthologist's own. Granted that the publishing of private anthologies is permissible, which we dispute, Dr. Bridges, in his *Spirit of Man*, was right in suppressing all signatures to the contributory poems (which occur, however, in an appendix). The alleged reason for their omission, and for the omission of titles to the poems, is that the book has to be read in sequence (as Dr. Bridges' new composite epic, we understand)

and that titles or signatures 'might distract attention and even overrule consideration.'

The greater the integrity of the private anthology, particularly when the author is a well-known poet, the more dangerous is it when put on the market: by its publication it appears to be an act of criticism instead of a mere expression of taste. Taste is the judgment that an individual makes of a thing according to its fitness in his private scheme of life. Criticism is the judgment that an individual makes of a thing according to its fitness to itself, its excellence as compared with things like itself, regardless of its application to his private scheme of life. With taste, a poem is good because it is liked; with criticism, it is good because it is good. Now, it is not objectionable for a person who has not sufficient originality to make his own criticism to accept another's; for criticism, unlike taste, which is arbitrary opinion, can be tested. The criticism of one person thus accepted can become another person's taste. But for one person to accept another's taste deprives the former of self-respect. Our charge against anthologies is, then, that they have robbed the poetry-reading public of self-respect.

The poet as the private anthologist of his own work provides the only instance in which a private anthology makes a legitimate public anthology. Every single-man volume of verse is a selection of all the poems that were written during the whole or

some period of the poet's life. Even a full *Collected Edition* does not contain all the poems he ever committed to paper, let alone those fragmentary poems and versions of poems that were rejected before they ever reached paper.

* * * * *

Of *Beauties of the Poets* there were many collections between 1780 and 1880. Three useful examples are Jane's *Beauties of the Poets*, a late eighteenth-century collection; Campbell's *Beauties of the British Poets*, published in 1825; and William Elwell's *The British Lyre*, published in 1854. Of Jane's anthology, which specialized in eighteenth-century metronomic verse, we have found the following oblique indictment, a paragraph from a letter to Southey by John Jones, the Old Servant; who knew it only too well:

'I soon engaged myself again, Sir, (in 1795) with an old gentleman and his three nieces, whose names were Alexander, uncle and sisters of the present Lord Chief Baron, and I had not been in the family many months before, young as I was, I was made an upper Servant, and as I received a little card-money at times I soon was able to procure me some books, which I did by subscribing two or three quarters to the library, and the ladies were very kind to me, and often lent me others, and about this time, Sir, I bought the first and almost the only book I was ever master of, which was called Jane's *Beauties* and this

I read over several times; but my chief reading now was history, and I made some poetical attempts but I kept copies of none of them excepting the epitaph on Molly Mutton, an old woman very well known about the streets of Bath at that time; but on some of my verses falling into the hands of the ladies, they were much amused with them, and, I believe, expressed regret that I had not been better educated. The housekeeper, Sir, was very kind to me, and on my expressing sorrow at her departure once when she was going to see her friends, she desired me to write something extempore in which my regret might be more strongly expressed, when in a few minutes I remember putting the following lines into her hand:

"There something is, my Martha dear,
So amiable about thee,
The house is Heaven when thou art here,
But Hell to me without thee.'' '

Jones' other poetical attempts were graver and more didactic and show how readily the anthology lends itself to the offices of a poetical horn-book.

Campbell's preface we must quote in full:

'At no period of our history have we possessed such a galaxy of varied talent evinced in the poetry of the age as at present: and never with some few unfortunate exceptions has the vigorous nerve and intellectual grasp of our bards while throwing "the drapery of a moral imagination over our poor shiver-

ing nature" been more subservient to the interests of religion, or tended more effectually to promote the intellectual as well as the moral happiness of the rising generation. We have therefore in the present selection of the *Beauties of the British Poets* given to the productions of our living authors a longer space than is usually allotted to them in works of this nature: yet not to the exclusion of the writers of the olden time. For it has been our aim to bring together all the principal pieces of acknowledged merit and of intrinsic beauty which have undergone the test of the severest criticism and examination and have received the stamp of public approbation, together with many a charming anonymous production snatched with cautious hand as it floated on the stream of time towards the abyss of oblivion.

'While seeking for Beauties we have been careful to ascertain that no poison lurks beneath the flowers. Nothing has been admitted which has a tendency to offend delicacy or injure morality, and we have been as studious to select those passages which convey some solid instruction as those that are merely addressed to the fancy. Occasionally we have introduced a Critical Remark which we flatter ourselves will be an acceptable addition.'

The promise of exciting modern work is not borne out by the index. There is no Keats included, almost nothing of Shelley, less of Cole-

ridge, a little inferior Wordsworth, no Blake, of course. The modern writers given most space are Byron, Burns, Rogers, Moore, James Montgomery, Cowper. Not quite so much of Scott and Southey (copyright difficulties?), but their portraits form the engraved frontispiece to the two volumes. The longest poems are Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and Stillingfleet's *Essay on Conversation*, which between them take up at least a hundred pages. Shakespeare is represented by five little stock extracts from the dramas, not a hundred lines in all; each extract given a moral heading such as 'Appearances are Deceptive,' 'The Power of Music,' 'The Course of True Love.' The eighteenth century is strongly represented, and there is a great deal of conventional 'Beauties of' verse-writing in the direct eighteenth-century tradition, of which this extract from Erasmus Darwin's *Upas Tree* is a charming example. He is speaking of 'Java's Isle':

'No spicy nutmeg scents the vernal gales,
No towering plaintain shades the midday vales.
No refluent fin the unpeopled stream divides,
No revolant pinion cleaves the airy tides.
Nor handed moles, nor beakéd worms return
That mining pass th' irremeable bourn.
Fierce in dread silence on the blasted heath
Fell UPAS sits, the Hydra-tree of Death.'

The British Lyre has a readable preface. Note the increased missionary moralistic tone, now at its full, but gradually wearing off (unless in definitely religious or educational anthologies) as the century advances, as the advance of democracy makes the reader's enjoyment the determining commercial factor in the making of books: disguised in critical language as art-for-art's-sake. Note also the increased self-congratulation of the popular anthologist, tending more and more to drive the poets themselves into obscurity:

'Three years have now elapsed since this little work first excited the attention of the Public, and if I may judge by the extensive diffusion it has enjoyed during that period, I have every reason to be satisfied with the appreciation of its readers. Filled with feelings of gratitude for the most hearty welcome allotted to my book, I consider it a delightful duty to express my thanks to its numerous friends and at the same time inform them that in this new edition I have endeavoured to improve the selection by inserting several modern poems which on account of the richness of their language, purity and beauty of their ideas, truly deserve the warm admiration of all lovers of English poetry. I now again launch *The British Lyre* into the vortex of public opinion, hoping its reception will prove as flattering to myself as in former times. With regard to the arrangement of

the poems I need only quote a few remarks of a friend, who kindly wrote the preface to the first edition: "The book is divided into three parts. The first contains pieces relating to the works of God or (*sic*) the phenomena of 'Nature' directing thought to all the lovely and awful demonstrations of the power and wisdom of the Creator, as described by the pen of poetic fancy. The second division relates to Man himself, to 'Home and Country,' to 'Social and Domestic Affections' – and here all the elevated feelings of patriotism (N.B. this was the date of the 'Indian Mutiny'), all the happy scenes of the heart are represented, while those deeper and sadder feelings, inherent to the frailty of man, are not forgotten. But after the praise of the beauties of Nature and the enjoyment of the high hopes of life, the third part, 'Devotion,' leads us to God Himself, shows us His Grace and Promises, our prospects of immortality, the consolation of public worship and of domestic prayers. Thus the author of this compilation will be found to have carried out the good idea of giving a clear description of 'Mankind' by placing his selections under three heads, the first 'The Place of our Existence,' the second 'Our Feelings and Actions during Life,' and the third 'Our Exit from this World and Our Hopes for the Future'." '

In the generation that has elapsed since our previous exhibit, a great change has come over the

Beauties. The eighteenth-century has been almost entirely cut out. Pope only gets a twenty-line part. Shenstone is dropped altogether. The Upas-Tree is forgotten. Byron, Burns, Rogers, Southey, Moore, hold their own; but Montgomery, Cowper and Scott are yielding pride of place to Wordsworth, Mrs. Hemans, Howitt, Barry Cornwall and Henry Kirke White. Coleridge, Shelley and Keats are very gradually creeping up. Tennyson, as Poet Laureate, has established himself in about five pages. Shakespeare still moralizes for a few lines each on 'The Grandfather's Death-bed,' 'Mercy,' 'Flattery and Friendship.' The existence of the Pre-Raphaelites is not yet recognized. A few seventeenth-century poets are revived: Waller, Marvell, Quarles, Vaughan, but each only in a short contribution. There are no poems included of any size: though long poems are still represented by proxy of their Beauties.

The British Lyre is thus transitional to the *Golden Treasury* of 1861, probably the first popular anthology in the modern sense which settled the whole troublesome question of 'Beauties' and their extraction by only claiming to be a 'lyrical' anthology: this with satisfaction both to the compiler and his readers. The compiler was saved the labour of going through the longer works of Chaucer, Pope, Shakespeare, Cowper and company, and the readers were saved the duty of 'looking up' the context of each extract, and could content themselves with a good

resolution to read these longer works as a whole at some (indefinite) future date. The *Golden Treasury* was thus an improvement on the *Beauties* in that it did not contain clippings from long poems which, becoming 'star-passages,' interrupt their rhythm by a false accentuation. On the other hand, the *Beauties* were preferable as being plainly nothing more ambitious than introductions to the complete works of the poets they included; while the *Golden Treasury* was complete in itself and could be used as a pocket Library of Poets and become very popular as such because it was no moralistic, ranged with greater freedom than its predecessors, and was at least ten years in advance of the literary taste of any rival.

The editor of this 'modern classic' was Francis Palgrave, working with two unnamed assistants; but he was guided in his selection either directly or indirectly by the judgment of Tennyson. Indeed, it was as much the influence of Tennyson through the *Golden Treasury* as the direct influence of his poems that gave the next two generations a Tennysonian view of the progress of English poetry. The *Golden Treasury*, with its later additions, has become the Dean of Anthologies, its original liberalism ossified beyond recognition. Its one serious rival in circulation, Professor Sir A. Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1900), admits its obligations; the compiler 'cannot and does not wish to erase the dye

his mind took from the *Golden Treasury*' ('dye' is appropriate, suggesting Palgrave's anthological vat). The *Treasury* is a usurping private anthology, very conscientiously compiled, but all the more formidable for that. For Palgrave was in private life not only an unsuccessful poet but a successful educationalist (the first because of the second); therefore well equipped to impose a personal taste (his own, guided by Tennyson's) as a critical canon on his public.

Palgrave, in the poetical style that marks the preface of practically every anthology – for the anthologist, after months of laborious reading of the works of others, likes to give his own pen a good airing, and this is his only chance – boasts:

'Chalmers' vast collection with the whole works of all accessible poets not contained in it and the best anthologies of different periods have been twice (?) systematically read through: and it is hence improbable that any omissions which may be regretted are due to oversight.'

Recent anthologists compiling trade collections have so much respect for Palgrave's industry that they generally use the same list of authors, merely varying it with alternative poems of the same character as those that he (or Tennyson) selected.

The copying of anthologist from anthologist always suggests sheep at a gap. Dr. Robert Bridges,

after the compilation of one trade anthology, *The Spirit of Man*, an act of genuine if misapplied creation, was persuaded to make another, *The Chilswell Book of English Verse*, which, though it altered the proportionate weight given to the elder poets and included a few rather backward moderns, was only a *Golden-Treasury-Oxford-Book-of-English-Verse* in disguise. One particular poem, John Clare's 'I am, but what I am who cares or knows?' is the only Clare poem in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* and the only one that Dr. Bridges printed; one might pass this as a case of great critics thinking alike, if it were not that Clare is far from being a one-poem man, and that Doctor Bridges evidently did not consult Edmund Blunden's recent and authoritative collection of Clare's poetry in which the proper text of the poem is restored. The *Oxford Book of English Verse* version was one rewritten by the asylum doctor who had charge of Clare's affairs at the time he wrote it. Dr. Bridges, to speak bluntly, borrowed and borrowed stupidly.

Against *The Chilswell Book of English Verse* may be set Miss Naomi Royde-Smith's *A Private Anthology* published about the same time. Miss Royde-Smith, in her fear of producing something remotely suggesting *The Golden Treasury* or its stepchild, reacts so violently from the obvious that her collection seems to be competing for a prize as *The Most Individual Anthology*. For instance, she in-

cludes nothing of Blake's but his *Address to Tirzah*, and nothing of Siegfried Sassoon's but a very slight poem written in 1910, years before he began any serious work. Miss Eleanor Brougham in her *Corne from Olde Fieldes* does not become quite so idiosyncratic as Miss Royde-Smith, though she introduces her anthology (of pre-eighteenth-century verse) with:

'I am purposely excluding from this anthology many of the masterpieces which have received the homage of a long succession of generations. The poems printed here are mainly chosen from those which have descended so plentifully upon us yet threaten through neglect to disappear altogether.'

Much of her choice is fugitive verse proper to be included in an anthology, particularly the early English carols in manuscript in the Balliol College Library; but she finds it necessary to preserve from oblivion pieces so well-known as Herbert's 'Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright'; Sidney's 'With how sad steps, O Moon,' Drayton's 'Since there's no hope, come let us kiss and part,' and Shirley's 'Glories of our Blood and State.' Rochester is represented by a poem really by Quarles, and Skelton is given only the usual commonplaces from *The Garland of Laurell.*

And now Mr. T. Earle Welby publishes his *Silver*

Treasury of English Lyrics in America where the *Golden Treasury* is as much a law to anthologists as in England: a case of international bi-metallism in which America, trying to keep her place perhaps, provides the humbler coinage. He admits Palgrave's as the classic anthology and does not try to compete but to supplement. His two tests are 'Is this poem, in its own sort, of rare excellence?' and 'Is it in Palgrave?' But in avoiding the Scylla of Palgrave, he sails dangerously near the Charybdis of Quiller-Couch. It would have been impracticable to admit both as classics, for the average reader cannot do with more than two standard anthologies to give a hand to each.[1]

In outward appearance a change has begun to come over the popular anthology in recent years, but this is only a change in journalistic technique. Instead of weightiness we tend to get lively sophistication; instead of gentlemanliness, a bland vulgarity; instead of confirmation of established taste, new discoveries not much believed in by the discoverer; instead of pompous flowery language – no, that remains in the prefaces as pompous and flowery as ever. The books are handier to the pocket, more dashing though more perishable in format. But as with the brisking up of journalism,

[1] Mr. J. C. Squire has however appraised the market more cleverly in bringing out an anthology of *Lesser Poets* rather than of Lesser Poems.

so with the anthologies: they have improved themselves with regard to everything but the one thing necessary, Poetry, as the newspapers with regard to everything but Truth.

Chapter III

THE ANTHOLOGIST IN OUR MIDST

THE ideal popular anthologist is one who concerns himself only with supplying his public with what it wants. But, granted for the argument's sake that the popular anthology must be, this idiotic single-mindedness is of the idiocy of genius. For who but an ideal popular anthologist would attempt to say what the poetry-reading public wants?

Does it want to know the sort of poems that were written at different periods in the past or that are being written to-day? Does it want a nodding acquaintance with all the poets, with or without a desire to enlarge that acquaintance? Or a handy reference collection of best poems as well as the nodding acquaintance? Does it want poems that have already become stock-anthology pieces or will it prefer a less conventional collection, an admitted Not-Quite-the-Real-Best? Or has it no critical ideas of Best and Worst? And after this, what does it want the poetry for? Does it go to poetry as it goes to religion; or as it goes to sport; or how?

His decision on all this, because what the public's

interest in poetry really is is an insoluble mystery, is bound to be a decision to compromise and to adopt the universally acceptable lie: 'As everybody knows what really good poetry is at first sight, there is no need to define it and no problem to be faced about what to include. Good poems, the poems that every one likes and understands, never get stale, never clash with each other and are always immediately recognized.' The ideal anthologist is a priest of Poetry to the people, ready to give them any acceptable god. He must be free from prejudices of his own but have a steady intuition of the sort of poems that other people will like from year to year. He must, in fact, to be free from prejudice, actually dislike poetry. He must be merely a barometer of fashion: if to-day he compiles an authoritative anthology of ancient or contemporary or mixed verse, he must be ready to recast it to-morrow. He will have to be an expert in literary booms. He will have to know, for instance, the exact upward popularity-curve of Donne, Marvell, Skelton, Blake, Clare and others and the exact downward curve of Burns, Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, as revealed by an exhaustive historical chart of previous booms and depressions in poets. He will speak with the mock-confident voice of Frederick Harrison:

'I protest that I am devoted to no school in par-

ticular; I condemn no school, I reject none. I am for the school of all the great men. I care for Wordsworth as well as for Byron, for Burns as well as Shelley, for Boccaccio as well as for Milton, for Bunyan as well as Rabelais, for Cervantes as much as for Dante, for Corneille as well as for Shakespeare, for Goldsmith as well as Goethe. I stand by the sentence of the world.'

Our anthologist will also have to appreciate the economy of book-producing: he must pay copyright fees for his key-names if necessary, but the bulk of his material must be either out of copyright or to be had for the asking (in a crafty letter of request). And he will not only be shrewd in the matter of fees; he will take every possible step to prevent the living poet from knowing beforehand in what company he is to find his poems; and will take care to send him no proofs. In this respect all popular anthologists are ideal; we have never yet heard of an anthology whose editor has sent round his proposed introduction and a full list of the poems he intends to include. This would be a tenderness on the poet's behalf that no anthologist with any respect for himself or his public would permit. If the proudest poet were to complain that being put into a popular anthology is like being taken blindfold into a crowded room and then having the bandage removed when the doors are locked behind

him, the meanest anthologist would laugh in his face.[1]

If the poet went on to suggest that the dead poets had any rights and should not be put in company of which they might be expected to disapprove, the anthologist would think that the poet was joking. Poetry, he would say, isn't like money or a business or landed property. The poet's testamentary wishes, to be understood from his work itself, have no force as soon as the short copyright period is over. His poetry is public property because, of course, the poet always writes as a public character and speaks to the universal heart of his beloved fellow-man.

[1] The most playful example of this sort of thing that we have recently met with is the introduction to Mr. E. V. Lucas's *Joy of Life*. This production, divided into sections: 'England,' 'The Changing Year,' 'Birds,' 'The Garden,' 'The Game,' 'Sport,' 'Travel,' 'The Sea,' 'Lovers,' 'Domesticity,' 'Children,' 'Books,' 'Philosophy,' 'Theology,' 'Thanksgiving and Prayer,' 'The Land of Heart's Desire,' 'Friends,' 'The Old Days,' 'Wine,' 'Rapture,' 'Rest and Slumber,' 'Evening Shadows,' 'Farewell,' is explained as follows:

'I do not pretend that the pages contain, as a whole, the best modern poetry that I could find; but they contain the best modern poetry that I could find with bearing upon my theme: the joy of life. English poets since the war have more often been grave than gay, sardonic than serene, yet I have been able to bend not a few even of the more pessimistic to my cheerful purpose. I hope that none will feel affronted when they see what has been done with them.'

Peep-bo! See what a fool I've made of you!

When dealing with the work of living poets our ideal anthologist may well study Mr. Louis Untermeyer, the chief modern American anthologist; who, as a retired business-man, is much more astute than his opposite number in England, Mr. Squire, a harnessed literary critic. Mr. Squire makes no concessions to modernist poetry; Mr. Untermeyer manages to find at least one accidentally easy piece in even the most startling innovators if sufficient pressure from the most advanced section of his public is applied to him. Mr. Untermeyer's political tactics in his *Modern American Poetry* have been condemned by superior literary critics; but he is really doing his best to be an ideal anthologist, at a great sacrifice, probably, to his taste. With each new edition the emphasis of his choice shifts: in the latest, for instance, he has at last consented to admit the popular importance of T. S. Eliot and E. E. Cummings. It is doubtful whether the superior critic, if he set about making an anthology, could do any better than Mr. Untermeyer. As he would be bound not to make way before popular success, he would have to compose his anthology high-mindedly of born failures. But even Mr. Untermeyer is not ideal, in spite of his readiness to please every one. For we cannot regard his criticism, which is in the main a register of the opinions of others, as entirely free from personal indulgencies. For instance, he might get few people to agree that Mr. Louis Untermeyer,

the poet, should be allotted nearly fifteen pages of the book, which puts him into the same rank with notables like Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg and Edwin Arlington Robinson. Nor might every one agree that Jean Starr Untermeyer should be given the same poem-space as Emily Dickinson, even though this is only half Mr. Untermeyer's ration. Perhaps, too, the ideal anthologist would avoid all detailed prose criticism like Mr. Untermeyer's where a simple speculative act of taste on the public's behalf would do: it would save a good deal of rewriting in the next edition if E. E. Cummings' stock, say, were to go up and Edwin Arlington Robinson's to fall again.

Among other qualities, the anthologist should have the power of recognizing a valuable old poem, obscured by a dingy setting, with all the acumen of a furniture dealer, and know how to present it properly. He should not be afraid to lop, combine, revise, retitle, respell and repunctuate; and, if there are two versions of a poem, to give the most poetical and suppress the most poetic. Random examples of such popularizing methods are already so numerous that he would not be wanting in encouragement. Barnes' *Woak Hill*, for instance, has been so frequently anthologized in seven stanzas that few of the general public are aware that it has three other stanzas at the end which the poet thought necessary to the poem but which are always omitted.

The painful first verse of Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces* is very seldom given; the *Oxford Book of English Verse* protects us from the too poetic latter half of Donne's *Ecstasy*. The case of the O'Shaughnessy *Ode* should encourage him in philanthropy towards the poet as well as towards the public. 'Palgrave recognizing,' to quote a modern anthologist, 'the great difference between the first three inspired stanzas of Arthur O'Shaughnessy's *Ode* and the others, calmly and courageously dropped the final four. William Alexander Percy performed many similar services for this singer and, as he says, 'in O'Shaughnessy's case, it is the only way to save him from himself and for posterity.' A fine bold example of unauthorized revision will be found in Mr. J. C. Squire's *Selections from Modern Poets*, where no less than five separate lyrics by Frank Prewett have been run together as a single poem without, as we are informed, the author's consent. Retitling is common. We find Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch retitling Wyatt's poem which appears in Tottel as *The Lover Showeth how he is Forsaken of Such as he sometime Enjoyed* as *Vixi Puellis nuper Idoneus*. This reference to Horace successfully keeps down the passion of the poem, too strong for an ideal anthology, to the commonplaces of which Horace is the Poet Laureate. And the poem as it appears under this title also gives an instance of how an anthologist prefers the most poetical to the most poetic version

of a poem. The *Oxford Book of English Verse* rejects the following as the last stanza:

'It was no dream; for I lay broad awaking:
But all is turned thorough my gentleness,
Into a strangë fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodnéss
And she also to use new fangleness.
But since that I so kindly am servéd
I would fain know what she hath déservêd' –

in favour of

'It was no dream; for I lay broad awaking:
But all is *turn'd now, through* my gentleness
Into a *bitter* fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodnéss;
And she also to use new-fangleness.
But since that I *unkindly so* am servèd,
"*How like you this?*" – *what hath she now deservèd?*'

We conclude that Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch went to Chalmers' *English Poets* first, following the example of Palgrave, his master, and found the version as he now presents it, though with the original title. Without digging further for the moment into the origin of this version, which is not Wyatt's own, let us see what necessitated it. It was evidently rewritten for a popular audience which could not be troubled with the archaic 'thorough' for 'through,' nor the 'strangë' for 'strange,' nor the inverted

accentuation of 'servéd' and of 'déservéd,' nor the satiric use of 'kindly.' 'How like you this' is patched in from a previous stanza to fill out the last line which, to a popular audience unable to appreciate its satiric meditative slowness, would read feebly enough. 'I would fain know' is probably regarded as padding, whereas it is the continued indignation of 'so kindly.' Sir Arthur was wise in giving the public what it could understand; as it was unlikely that anyone would go back behind Chalmers, no indication was given in the anthology that the text was not Wyatt's original. As a matter of fact, Chalmers, Palgrave and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch have a common source: Tottel. Apparently between the writing of the poem about the year 1536 and its printing in 1557 some hand, possibly Tottel's own, made these changes. So Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in this case at least, is the ideal anthologist again, copying from the ideal anthologist; instead of getting the vexatious manuscript reading from Doctor Nott's edition long ago published from the Harrington MSS.

Respelling is a matter of less importance; even the poet himself will sometimes allow the printer to have his way in matters of correct usage. But to do with William Barnes, say, what certain anthologists have done with him, to transform his fantastically printed Dorsetshire dialect into educated English, is a service which our hero, however, will not hesitate to undertake. Examples of daring repunctuation are

particularly common in anthologized versions of Shakespeare's sonnets. We have commented fully on the treatment of *Th'expence of Spirit in a waste of shame*, in another work.[1]

A further quality necessary in a popular anthologist will be an almost morbid modesty. He must be able to bring a blush to his own cheeks by the very thought of all the indecencies and blasphemies he has come upon in his rambles: he must be as tender of the virgin-mind of his putative public as an old-fashioned mother of her daughter's, or a new-fashioned daughter of her mother's. And to this modesty we must add a great gift for stupidity in face of any difficult passage in a poem. At the first glimmer of any possible obscurity he must shut his eyes tight and pass on in search of something easier.

Who are the present popular anthologists? They fall into five common occupational categories:

1. Irresponsible enthusiasts acting often in the name of a cause.

2. 'Minor poets,' disguised sometimes as college professors, who wish to bully the public into accepting them as major poets through the leverage of their anthologies.

3. Professional critics who have easy access to the contributory volumes and are on good enough terms

[1] *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*: Heinemann, 1927.

with publishers and poets to get copyright matter cheap.

4. The publishers themselves.

5. Poets with a reputation which the publishers are anxious to help them capitalize as an offset against the comparatively poor returns their invividual volumes of poetry usually bring in.

Do they in the main fall far short of the ideal possibilities of their task?

Let us observe the popular anthologist in action. He must first settle upon a time and space limit. Let us suppose that he has chosen a grand panoramic view from the earliest beginnings, e.g. 'From Beowulf to Binyon,' but that his space is limited to the five-shilling or one dollar-twenty-five cents octavo in stiff boards. He is to provide 'the best' – that is, representative poems by the most desirable authors; to whom he will allot page-space according to their contemporary standing. Since Fitzgerald with *Omar Khayyam* and Coleridge with the *Ancient Mariner* are not all that much better than Landor's usual short contribution of *Rose Aylmer*, *Ianthe* and *I strove with none*, or than John Fletcher's of *Oh fair sweet face*, *Hence all you vain delights*, and *Man is his own star*, it will be necessary for him to cut *Omar Khayyam* as it has been cut in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, and to omit *The Ancient Mariner* in favour of two unimportant Coleridge items, as the

Golden Treasury has done (under the pretext that it is less 'lyrical' than *Omar Khayyam*, which is given in full on account of Tennyson's extravagant estimate of Fitzgerald as a poet).

The anthologist, then, decides, on his page-limit, choses his list of authors according to an imaginary popularity vote and allots his page-space in descending order of generosity. Shakespeare fifteen pages, Keats fourteen, Milton thirteen-and-a-half, Wordsworth the same, down to Southey, Poe, Samuel Rogers and Laurence Binyon one-half apiece. Next he will draw up a list of subjects from which to choose his poems, such as:

Triumphant Love.
Renunciation in Love.
Christian Mystic Love.
A Hunting Song.
Farm House Life.
A Sea Piece.
A Spring Piece.
A Garden Piece.
Remembrance of Childhood.
Grief for Departed Friends.
A Pastoral.
A Poem about a Train.
A Poem about England, and/or
A Poem about the Stars and Stripes.
A Battle Piece.

A Poem about a Dead Child.
An Irish Piece.
Miscellaneous.

In choosing these poems he will look for the following proportion as given in the old punch-brewing recipe:

'One of sour,
Two of sweet,
Four of strong,
And eight of weak.'

He must go a little further afield than his predecessors, but not too far afield. Though he must not use too much of the material of the two established anthologies – the *Golden Treasury* and the *Oxford Book of English Verse* – the same list of authors must be fairly closely observed, and the same type of poem. For instance, the *Intimations of Immortality* may as a subject be allotted to Henry Vaughan's *Retreat*, as Sir Algernon Methuen has done, while not robbing Wordsworth of page-space. Or, a poem other than *The Old Familiar Faces* may be found to put over Lamb's signature, and 'grief for departed friends' as a subject may be allotted to Siegfried Sassoon's *Twelve Months After*. The new page-length importance of Rupert Brooke being realized, the poem about the Glorious Dead may be allotted to him instead of to Campbell or Collins; and his *Grantchester* may take the place of

Browning's *Home Thoughts from Abroad*. The farm-house piece may similarly be entrusted to Edmund Blunden or Robert Frost instead of to Crabbe or Samuel Rogers.

Since there are two divisions of the public to gratify, the public that wants pleasure and the public that wants literary small-talk, the arrangement had better be for pleasure, with the literary references tucked away in a small-print appendix. There must be an index of first lines and one of authors' names; and a list of acknowledgments to publishers. The rest of the anthologizing may safely be left to the printers and binders. The title must be the battle already half-won. So Mr. Adam Gowans prefaces his *The Hundred Best Poems* (Lyrical) with: 'Let me frankly admit, to begin with, that the attractiveness and probable selling qualities of the title of this little book proved, when it had once been thought of, too powerful arguments in its favour for it to be abandoned.'

This preface, as it happens, provides a ready model for our anthologist to imitate: 'I am fully conscious of the presumption such a title implies in an unknown selector, but at the same time I submit. . . . I can assert without fear of contradiction that every one of the poems I have included is a "gem of purest ray serene," that none can be too often read or too often repeated to one's self. . . . In conclusion my very warmest thanks are due to Messrs. Macmillan

& Co. for permission . . . to Messrs. Smith Elder & Co. for a like privilege . . . *also to the following gentlemen . . .*'

The best introductory preface would be one anthologized from all the anthology prefaces. As follows:

'Poetry is the light that never was on sea or land, and the homely glow in the cottage window; the star in the sky and the fire on the hearth; the careless laughter of children and the dreams of the man of business; the glare of the footlights and the sacred flame of the altar; the jewels of the privileged few and the common coinage that everybody handles . . .'

The Bookman Treasury of Living Poets.

'All the Gems in this volume are not of equal brilliancy: the diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls of literature are few; – but there are other gems than these, of inferior value but still gem-like; – agate, cornelian, amethyst, turquoise, onyx and scores of others known to the lapidary and jeweller and prized by the mand by the public to whose appreciation they are offered.'

One Thousand and One Gems.

'Nor have I sought in these Islands only, but wheresoever the Muse has followed the tongue that among living tongues she most delights to honour.'

The Oxford Book of English Verse.

'The poet touches life at every point; he paints all phases of human existence and in moments of exaltation he mounts to ideal regions and sees . . . the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending. To such a vision the common man is not wholly blind. He knows without seeming to know what is beautiful and true.'

From Shakespeare to Hardy.

'Like the fabled fountain of the Azores, but with a more various power, the magic of this Art can confer on each period of life its appropriate blessing: on early years, Experience; on maturity, Calm; on age, Youthfulness. . . .'

Golden Treasury.

'But there is no arbitrary isolation of one theme from another; they mingle and interpenetrate throughout, to the music of Pan's flute, and of Love's viol, and the bugle-call of Endeavour and the passing-bell of Death. . . .'

Poems of To-day.

At this point we might stumble on such contradictions as this:

'Every poet writes for the general public or he would not complain when it neglects him, and the greater poets sooner or later make the wider appeal.'

Mr. St. John Adcock.

and

'Poetry is the most private of the arts, the art of the man who can live independently of the crowd.'

Mr. Robert Lynd.

But our ideal anthologist would undoubtedly be able to harmonize them somehow.

Perhaps most of all the anthologist must remember that his public loves personalities. A poet's self-portrait will always be welcome. Keats must be presented standing tip-toe up on his little hill; Mr. Yeats standing smothered o'wit on the Dublin pavement deliberating a journey to Inisfree; Gray as little Tommy Stout pulling poor pussy sadly out of the water; Milton making decent clutches at his late espousèd Saint (not the one he was so angered at not being able to divorce); Burns interrupting the ploughing of his crooked furrow to address maudlin apologies to the daisies and mice he was disturbing; Shakespeare as Romeo.

In fact, we may conclude that most present-day popular anthologies and anthologists are, after all, not so very far from what they should be. *If* they should be.

Chapter IV

THE POPULAR POEM AND THE POPULAR READER

THE aim of the popular anthologist is to make a single book out of clippings from many books; to create a composite author who shall be a mean struck between all the poets included. But to strike a mean even, for instance, between Burns, Rogers, Tennyson and Clough, with only a century separating the first and last, is plainly impossible. The result is the choice of a negative type of poem not proper to any of the poets, that is, not the sort of poem that either Burns and Clough must have written, but one that neither of them need have written. The intelligent but unread reader who wishes to find out what poets he would like to know better gets no help from the popular anthology: in an anthology everything reads democratically much the same. We would not go so far as to say that every poem in *The Golden Treasury* is uncharacteristic of the author, but we do say that even positive poems lose character by being anthologized. Poems by Shakespeare, Donne, Shelley, Keats, become affected by the same negative poison, to a point where they are almost

unrecognizable; so faces in the Underground or Overhead railways are made negative, as faces, by the spell of the cheap ticket which is the only link between them. In place of their original quality the good poems acquire the same meaningless competitive vulgarity as the bad: a conversation between various anthology favourites would read something like this:

LANDOR'S 'ROSE AYLMER': 'I'm far the most popular of this "Best Hundred": I'm so easily learned by heart, I'm so short and sweet.'

SMART'S 'SONG TO DAVID': 'But I'm the longest and I'm good all through.'

SHIRLEY'S 'THE GLORIES OF OUR BLOOD AND STATE': 'I have the best beginning.'

SHAKESPEARE'S 'FIDELE'S DIRGE': 'And I'm by Shakespeare.'

MAHONY'S 'THE BELLS OF SHANDON': 'I have the most rhymes.'

HOOD'S 'I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER': 'I appeal to the Universal Heart of Man.'

GRAY'S 'ODE TO A FAVOURITE CAT': 'I never fail to get a laugh with my little joke in the fourth stanza.'

ANON'S 'SUMMER IS ICUMEN IN': 'I'm the oldest poem in the book.'

MR. YEATS' 'INISFREE': 'My bloke's still alive and he's got the Nobel Prize for being the best poet IN THE WORLD.'

It is doubtful whether even the 'masterpieces' can weather the effects of being anthologized. The reprinted poem is not like the copied art-treasure. Every accurate reprinting of a poem *is* the original. If this were clearer, perhaps, some appeal might be made to the anthologist against debasing the poem in what is seldom more than commercial exploitation – or at best the distribution of masterpieces as an aristocratic largesse to the reading populace.

Apart from the general damage suffered by 'best poems' in being herded together in anthologies, there are particular ill-effects arising from the forced association of the poets themselves. The Countess of Pembroke's *For the Healing of the Nations* was published during the War in aid of the Red Cross; a Wiltshire anthology which, suffering from a traumatic neurosis, overflowed into 'all climes and ages' and may be taken as type of the honestly irresponsible collection. Here is the list of contributors in full, and the editor's note:

Beaconsfield, Earl of (Benjamin Disraeli)
Binyon, Laurence
Bridges, Robert
Brooke, Rupert
Bunston, Anna (Mrs. de Bary)
Coleridge, Miss Mary E.
Confucius
Corneille
Crewe, Marquis of
De la Mare, Walter
Diane, Comtesse
Dostoievsky

Ecclesiastes
Elizabeth, Queen
Engleheart, George
Epictetus
Euripides
Fonblanque, Ethel M. de (Mrs. Arthur Harter)
Gales, R. L.
Glenconner, Lady
Hamilton, Lord Frederic
Harte, Bret
Henniker-Major, Hon. Ethel
Herbert, George
Johnston, H. F.
Jonson, Ben
Jones, I. W.
Keble, John
à Kempis, Thomas
Kipling, Rudyard
Lyttleton, Hon. Mrs. A.
Malone, W.
Meynell, Mrs. Wilfred
More, Thomas
Morley, Viscount
Newbolt, Sir Henry
Pawlowska, Yoi
Pembroke, Sidney, Earl of
Pound, Ezra
Remizov, Alexey
Richardson, Mrs. H.
Robinson, W. F.
Rogers, Samuel
Sackville, Lady Margaret
Seaman, Sir Owen
Shakespeare, William
Slow, Edward
Taylor, Jeremy
Tennant, Hon. E. Wyndham
Theresa, St.
Thoreau
Traherne, Thomas
Trench, Herbert
Underhill, Miss Evelyn
Voltaire
Williams, Alfred

'If I have inadvertently committed any breach of copyright I must beg forgiveness, stating at the same time that in every case I have tried my best to

trace the owner and to print nothing without permission.'

Euripides, Samuel Rogers, Confucius, Voltaire and St. Theresa, etc., must certainly have generously waived this little question of copyright-fees, for it was all for the Good Cause. But they must have had great difficulty keeping up the conversation. When Ecclesiastes and Disraeli exchanged

'Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth,'

and

'It is a holy thing to see a nation saved by its youth;'

even their common nationality and the common rhythm of their sentiments can hardly have reconciled them. Shakespeare probably felt a similar embarrassment with Sir Owen Seaman. After hearing the latter's

'England, in this great fight to which you go
Because, where Honour calls you, go you must . . .'

he must have felt like a cad in making this contribution:

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove,'

Shelley, Sidney Suckling, Scott and the other S's, even Siegfried Sassoon, he had met before and could comfortably exchange handshakes with, but the Editor of *Punch*! He would rather admit himself Bacon and 'bear it out even to the edge of doom' in the company of Laurence Binyon and T. E. Brown. This particular anthology is obviously too diffident to have lasting ill-effects on the better poems. But the regular anthology on which it is modelled is not redeemed by any such weakness.

The technique of the anthology is particularly apparent in the arrangement of poems. If the alphabetic arrangement has been chosen we always, for instance, get the same poem of Lamb's run up against the same three of Landor's; or if the arrangement is according to date of birth and date of death we always get the same three poems of Landor's run up against the same one of Lamb's. Lamb and Landor become twinned in the mind as inevitably as Scylla and Charybdis, Sacco and Vanzetti, David and Jonathan, Mutt and Jeff. Yet what real connection is there between Landor's poetry and Lamb's? One would say none at all. Landor was austere, select, ambitious, restrained; Lamb was open-hearted, unassuming, a punster, not ashamed of having common sentiments and setting them down simply. How then does the more ingenious anthologist fit them into his scheme of composite-authorship? As follows. Lamb's *Old Familiar Faces* (which occurred in every

anthology but nine of the sixty-eight that we examined for this purpose) can be supplemented by his uncharacteristic *Hester*, which makes a perfect bridge between Landor's uncharacteristic *Rose Aylmer* and *The Old Familiar Faces*.

That is the trick at a glance. But let us take further examples. Collins and Pope are near enough contemporaries to be worth tuning together. A careful choice of their poems will therefore be necessary. Collins'

> 'How sleep the brave who sink to rest
> By all their country's wishes bless'd!'

is near enough in style to Pope's *Ode on Solitude*:

> 'Happy the man whose wish and care
> A few paternal acres share' –

to give the necessary illusion of composite authorship. Pope may, as in a short anthology like Mr. Gowans' *Hundred Best Poems* (*Lyrical*), be alphabetically cast on the same page as Samuel Rogers. What then? Well, that same poem of Pope's is one of the few things he wrote short enough to anthologize, so Rogers must be searched for a companion piece. Mr. Gowans has managed splendidly. He has found a poem which can actually be interdigitated with Pope's without interrupting the sense of either. It is called *A Wish*. So the title of the

doubled poem which we shall print for fun will be

Ode to Wished-for Solitude

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground.
(*Mine* be that cot beside the hill.
The bee-hives hum shall soothe *my* ear.
A willowy brook, that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near).

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose tree in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.
(The swallow oft beneath *my* thatch
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest.
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch
And share *my* meal, a welcome guest).

Blest who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days and years slide soft away
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day.
(Around *my* ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew,
And *Lucy* at her wheel shall sing
In russet gown and apron blue).

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence which most does please
With meditation.
The village church among the trees
Where first our marriage-vows were given
With merry peals shall swell the breeze
And point with taper spire to heaven.

Envoi.

Thus let us live, unseen, unknown,
Thus unlamented let us die,
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where we lie.

A happy combination. Pope's Ideal Man does the milking, ploughing and wood-chopping. Rogers' Lucy minds the spinning-wheel and does not interfere with the study, ease and recreation which her goodman finds time for in intervals of husbandry. Rogers' Ideal Man does not add any tasks to Pope's except bee-keeping, and supplies abundance of local amenities. But do you find a discrepancy between Pope's solitude and Rogers' pilgrim and his Lucy? It is all right really. Do not think that Pope's Ideal Man was intended to live literally unseen and unknown, any more than Rogers intended his Ideal Man to entertain pilgrims. Pope's man knows well enough that as a farmer he will need a wife to make butter and the beds, and that he will have to show

himself at markets occasionally, and that as a reader he will have to go out and buy books. Rogers' man knows well enough that the age of pilgrimages is long over in England and that vagabonds will not presume to take him literally. The only textual change that we have made is in the *Envoi*, where we have included Lucy.

All this is not primarily a criticism of Pope or of Rogers but of the anthologist who discovered the poems and threw them together close enough to let them grow into a single piece; and again of the anthologist who described both these poems in his preface as 'gems of purest ray serene' instead of disregarding them in the first case as ineffective and false, as he would admit if confronted with the history of their authors in relation to such idealistic pictures of simple life.

Need we take the chain of composite authorship farther forward or backward? We could show how, in alphabetical anthologies, Collins' *How sleep the brave* will pair with Campbell's *Toll for the Brave*; and how Rogers and Wordsworth are close enough in date to get thrown together in unalphabetical anthologies, so that Wordsworth's 'Lucy' will get somehow identified with Rogers' 'Lucy' poem given above; and how in a subject-anthology, under the heading of 'Lost Maidens,' the 'Lucy of the Springs of Dove' will get confused with Kingsley's 'Mary of the Sands of Dee.'

Once these confusions start, there is no checking them. Byron's praise of his mistress:

'She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes . . .'

is infected by and infecting Sir Henry Wotton's praise of his:

'You meaner beauties of the night
That poorly satisfy our eyes
More by your number than your light,
You common people of the skies . . .'

Shirley and Shakespeare, alphabetically allied, get entangled:

'. . . There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings –
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust';

and

'Fear no more the frown of the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke!
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:

The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this and come to dust.'

When the anthology is used for recitations in schools and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* and Gray's contiguous *Elegy* and Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy* are as usual learned by heart, further unfortunate associations occur:

'This said, he left them and returned no more:
But rumours hung about the country-side
That the lost scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied . . .

'Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring . . .

'Haply some hoary headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dew away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn" . . .

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill . . .

'How often have I loitered o'er thy green
Where humble happiness endeared each scene . . .

'But times are altered . . . . .
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose . . .'

until there is nothing left of these poems but confused recollections of Dr. Thomas Arnold's *Elegy in a Deserted Schoolyard.*

Through likeness of title and nearness of date poems so fundamentally unlike as Keats' *Nightingale* and Shelley's *Skylark* affect each other strangely; the rhythm of the one 'vibrates in the memory' and unsettles the other, and it requires a serious mental effort to assign the right bird to the right case.

The fact that both poems are sonnets and written about the same period will link up Keats' *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* with Wordsworth's *The World is too much with us*:

'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When some new planet swims into his ken,
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men . . .'

with

'So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn . . .'

although by themselves Keats' sonnets read like Keats, and Wordsworth's like Wordsworth without the possibility of confusion.

Between Ben Jonson and Burns there seems little danger of mistaken identity; yet after a course of anthology-reading 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' is indistinguishable in manner from 'O my luve

is like a red, red rose' and 'Go fetch to me a pint of wine'; Milton's *Nativity Hymn* becomes an intimation of Wordsworthian Immortality, and Herrick writes lyrics for the Elizabethan dramatists.

If *Annie Laurie* is included it is long odds against the original version (*not* by Lady John Scott but by Douglas of Fingland in 1680) being included even in an appendix, as Colonel John Buchan has done in his *Northern Muse*. Instead of

> 'She's backit like the peacock,
> She's breastit like the swan,
> She's jimp aboot the middle,
> Her waist ye weel micht span:
> Her waist ye weel micht span
> And she hath a rolling ee . . .'

we have a censored version in which Annie Laurie appears demure rather than wild:

> 'Her brow is like the snaw-drift,
> Her neck is like the swan,
> Her face it is the fairest
> That e'er the sun shone on:
> That e'er the sun shone on.
> And dark-blue is her ee . . .'

an opportune bridge between Burns and Moore.

The reader whose first approach to poetry is

through anthologies usually acquires the anthology habit for life; he cannot distinguish poets from each other by what may be called the *handwriting quality* in their poems. It hardly occurs to him that there is such a quality, or that it is worth discovering by reading poetry in its original setting. If you ask him who wrote 'God's in His Heaven, all's well with the world,' he will likely enough reply: ' I don't know the name, but it's on page 856 of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* – didn't he also write "*Where the Mayne glideth*" and that nice poem about "*The pleasant waters of the river Lee*"? I'm bad at names.' He has never read a long poem or anything much longer than the *Scholar Gipsy* and the abridged *Love in the Valley* by George Meredith. He cannot read any poem which presents the slightest difficulty of thought, which demands, that is, more than one reading. He regards poetry as a patent food, 'Just add hot water and serve.' He calls himself a lover of poetry if he has stored up a few rhetorical plums such as Lovelace's

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so much
> Loved I not Honour more';

or Jonson's

> 'Death, ere thou hast slain another
> Learn'd and fair and good as she
> Time shall throw a dart at thee';

or Keats'

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know' –

for social occasions. But take the first quotation. The sentiment is neatly rendered but fundamentally dishonest. Merely preferring martial honour to his mistress' arms did not help Lovelace in any way to love her so much. He loved her less, in fact, because she had, as a woman, lower social rating than the sword, the horse, the shield. There is no causal relation here between love and honour – artful cavalier flattery disguises a set of brutal sentiments that might otherwise disgust even an anthologist and his public. Then the second quotation. The Countess of Pembroke had been a generous patroness to poets and Jonson's prophecy that she would have no rival to the end of time might pass if he had contented himself with a simple and dignified recital of her personal qualities. Instead, however, he closes his tribute with a poetical flourish that robs it of seriousness. For, though visitors to the church-memorial or readers of a popular anthology may be impressed by these fine words, Death won't. As for Keats, the equation between Truth and Beauty, together with the conclusion, is just a clumsy attempt at a serious proposition in logic. Compare it with these two inspired formulas by Mr. W. E. Johnson:

'The factual universal may be expressed in the form

"Every substantive in the universe of reality is Q if P"; while the assertion of law assumes the form "Any substantive in the universe of reality would be Q if it were P." '[1]

Our remarks on the effect on the poem of being repeatedly anthologized, its slow spiritual breakdown, may be considered fanciful. But of the bad effect on the reader of repeatedly reading the same poem there need be no dispute; we have only to try the following experiment: If you say the same word, any word – say, if you say the word 'word'; say it – 'word,' 'word,' 'word,' like that a few times over: then you have 'word' for awhile stripped clean and new. You realize its character, its sound, the letters that compose it, as you haven't done for years. But then go on, a hundred times more, saying the word 'word' – 'word,' 'word,' 'word,' and it gets completely ga-ga as a word. In fact the word 'word' has already in this paragraph begun to fail in its habitual organization, to change colour and suggest other similar words like 'wood' and 'ward' and 'wort' and 'wart,' until you will soon not be able to recognize it as your old friend 'word.' This curious obliteration is, of course, the common fate of prayers. When the bedesman has said ten thousand *ave's* for the repose of a rich man's soul there is no telling

[1] W. E. Johnson, *Logic, Part III*, p. 6, quoted by R. B. Braithwaite, *The Idea of Necessary Connexion* (II), MIND, vol. xxxvii, no. 145.

what the ten-thousand-and-first *ave* will mean to him.

There are three stages in repetition: the first when the sense still persists; the second when it wavers and breaks and free-association begins; the third when free association itself breaks down and the thing repeated becomes a pure incantation. When you get a pure incantation, it is no longer a case of the word or prayer having any soul of its own, even its friends (that is, the associated ideas) have deserted it: it becomes an empty lodging in which any strange creature may choose to nest. That is why clergymen often have such haunted faces. In the technical religious phrase the arrival at this stage in prayer is called 'accidie': it is the time when the Belgian-looking devils slip in. The first act of black magic is to empty a prayer of religious meaning and so smuggle something anti-religious in. You can always tell by listening to a clergyman when he has reached this stage of 'accidie.' He may be able to repeat all the prayers word-perfectly; but there is a note (like the note of the churn when butter has at last begun to form) which is unmistakable. Usually, however, as in a musical-box a note gets broken, so a word will break in a prayer. We know a parish church where the parson Sunday after Sunday intones:

> 'Who *desireth the death* of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live';

and the congregation, as spell-bound as he, never notices the disappearance of an important negative.

A rather worse case was that of a lecturer during the War who was employed by the War Office to address troops on the subject of ' Our War Aims.' It was at first, in 1914, quite a good lecture. The lecturer did not let it harden into a formula until late in the Spring of 1915, when he nevertheless gave it accurately and with conviction and without personal strain. In 1916 it was still word-perfect, but the lecturer had lost reality: he looked dim on the platform. Late in 1917 it had begun to fray: there was no actual break of sense, but the words were strangely clipped and slurred and the lecturer was in a complete state of self-hypnosis. Shortly before the Armistice there was a nervous breakdown. There had been some violent disturbance during the lecture (an Australian audience had begun to barrack) and the hypnosis had been interrupted. The lecturer had tried to get into familiar touch again with his own lecture, but the result was a bad short-circuit. The catenation broke and the lecture degenerated into a recurring sequence of three sentences, including the joke (always sure of a laugh) about the Entente Cordiale and King Edward VII's 'love of French Institutions.'

Consider, then, in the light of these effects of repetition, the case of the anthology poem, such as *L'Allegro* or Shakespeare's *When in disgrace with*

fortune and men's eyes, which probably had a bad beginning with the anthology reader when he first learned them by heart in the class-room. In the class-room meaning could obviously not have mattered, but memory and 'expression' did. And what the adult reader recognizes when he reads these poems in an anthology again are not meaning-echoes but memory- or expression-echoes of what, in recitation, received most emphasis. He will greet again such phrases as 'Come and trip it as you go, On the light fantastic toe,' or 'Trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,' and get nothing from them but repetition-pleasure. By the time he has repeated them to himself a few dozen times (a particular line often getting associated with a habitual act such as shaving, or posting a letter, or eating the breakfast egg) and has seen the 'light fantastic toe' quoted a few dozen times in theatrical journals and 'Trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries' quoted a few dozen times on the comic pages of fiction monthlies, he will be unable to realize that 'fantastic toe' and 'bootless cries' have real meanings. He will have the same blank feeling towards them as towards words like *peppermint* or *hedgehog* which he never by any chance breaks up into their original parts, 'mint' and 'pepper,' 'hog' and 'hedge,' but remembers by a vague sensuous image. The popular anthologist makes a practice of including as many poems of this exhausted character as he conveniently

can; they give neither himself nor the reader any trouble.

'Beachcomber,' of the *London Express*, knows all about anthologies:

ANOTHER ANTHOLOGY

'Mr. Dribble's "Hundred Best Telephone Numbers" is all that an anthology should be. It is comprehensive and free from prejudice. Moreover, it includes many new numbers, the compiler having gone to the little-known outlying exchanges for fresh talent. 28443 Pobham, for instance, is a genuine discovery. Nearly all the favourite West-End exchanges are well represented, but one misses the superb 00010001 Mayfair. Also, one could have done with more Park numbers. It must be admitted, however, that the compiler has done his work so well that he has included numbers to suit all tastes. And if I were condemned to a life in prison or on a desert island, and were allowed to take six numbers with me, I should find them all in this anthology. One may conclude with the hope that each one of these hundred numbers may find an answering echo in at least one exchange.

* * * * *

'I understand that the success of this anthology has emboldened Mr. Dribble to prepare a similar work, which will be called the "Hundred Best Trains."'

Chapter V

THE PERFECT MODERN LYRIC

THE effect of anthologies on the general reader extends into criticism: the professional critic is in most cases merely a more than usually infatuated reader of anthologies. The critic's business has come to be to condone the general reader's wilful inertness; to reprove or neglect poets who do not take these into account; and to bear out his assumption that the poet's first thought in writing a poem is its eventual inclusion in an anthology. How general this assumption is can be seen by a glance at Mr. Norman Ault's[1] *Elizabethan Lyrics*. (On the whole this is quite a scholarly and honest piece of editing; if it had been content to include only the ten hitherto unpublished pieces and the two or three hundred pieces otherwise difficult of access it would have been worthy of even greater praise. But the editor's scholar's-conscience has not been proof against the popular-anthology temptation of using *Elizabethan* in an 'æsthetic' sense. The Elizabethan age closed abruptly with the death of the Queen and

[1] Author of *Dreamland Shores*, *The Poet's Life of Christ*, and *The Podgy Book of Tales*.

the accession of the unlovable, unfearable and un-English James I. And about a third of the poems are Jacobean in date, or probably more, including one or two of Shakespeare's sonnets. A number were written in the 1530's and are only made Elizabethan by the doubtful expedient of printing Tottel's versions rewritten twenty-five years later to suit contemporary taste. The only connection between poems written in the middle of the reign of Henry VIII and those written at the end of the reign of James I is, indeed, that they are both un-Elizabethan.)

Mr. Ault writes in his preface (the italics are ours):

'The poems are arranged neither in the order of the birthdays of the authors, nor according to subject matter: but year by year according to the dates at which each poem *first became known to the public for which the author wrote*. This plan renders it possible to see each poem *in relation to its proper historical background of contemporary song and thus to estimate its comparative as well as its actual quality*; and in the case of the *better known* poets (who are *of course* represented by more numerous selections) to study the development of the work of the individual author.'

We have here then the editor in a dual anthology rôle: as a modern anthologist catering retrospectively

to Elizabethan public taste and as an Elizabethan anthologist catering prospectively to modern public taste. The result is a two-fold distortion: not only the distortion of textual material into æsthetic material but the distortion of the æsthetic material as well. An Elizabethan anthologist turning the same textual material into æsthetic material would have studied a taste very different from Mr. Ault's twentieth-century high-brow taste. Instead of Shakespeare forty-eight poems, Breton nine, he would have made it Shakespeare nine, Breton forty-eight.

The little dedication of *Printer to Reader* which Mr. Ault puts at the beginning of his collection, borrowing it from the Elizabethan anthologist of *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, 1584, may be touching; but it is most inappropriate when made to introduce a number of poems by Vaux, Wyatt, Shakespeare, Donne and others which do not correspond with the anthology taste of the book to which it was originally attached:

'You that in music do delight
Your minds for to solàce,
This little book of sonnets may
Well like you in that case.
Here may you have such pretty things
As women much desire:
Here may you have of sundry sorts
Such songs as you require.

Wherefore, my friend, if you regard
Such songs to read or hear,
Doubt not to buy this pretty Book,
The price is not so dear.'[1]

Mr. Ault, in spite of what he writes about his arrangement, does give a list of authors with dates of birth, and does give a careful subject-concordance with such headings as *Time* (see also 'Beauty' and 'Gather the Rose-bud'), *Tobacco*, *Town Life*, *Trade*, *Travel*, *Tristia*, *Toilet*. He will be much preyed on by future anthologists. 'And by God's Body,' in Wyatt's words, 'I would he might be so served, and then were he well served.' He makes this subject-arrangement because he knows that the reader, finding it impossible to connect poems with the names of their authors, is inclined to group poetry in his mind according to subject (as 'Thus the Mayne glideth' is grouped with 'The pleasant waters of the river Lee' and various Skylarks with various Nightingales).

The effect of this practice on criticism will, we hope, be made clear by instancing several modern poems that have gained undeserved reputation by it. The first is a poem of which we have a right to speak more severely than others because one of us first met it in a popular anthology and the other wrote it. It was written in a crowded room when the author

[1] Longmans, Green & Co., 10*s.* 6*d.*

was just nineteen, with official stationery and gramophone intermissions. The subject was suggested by a reproduction, in a Christmas supplement, of Holman Hunt's 'Scapegoat.' This public setting for the birth of the poem may have had something to do with its subsequent popularity: public sentiment somehow infiltrated. We would not say that the poem was originally dishonest in its conception, but it certainly is made to appear so by its being anthologized; and now even its author can only with difficulty remember the genuine feelings that provided it with a nucleus.

The story was simple; a supposed tender encounter between Christ and the yearly scapegoat in the Wilderness. Little thought was necessary after the first three lines; it only required a quaint assemblage of desert animals recalled from Isaiah, and a grafting of the love-of-animals theme on the Christ theme to help it out. There is a loose equation of Christ with the scapegoat, and the scapegoat weeps like Blake's Lion when he found himself in an equally tender relationship with Lyca in the *Songs of Innocence*. And that is all. The only flaw in it as an anthology piece has been that in one line the definite article was found wanting. But the anthologists soon put that right (without the author's consent) and the perversity has never been allowed to return. The poem has been in at least seventeen English anthologies and several more in America. Its increment by

this means has been six or seven times as much as the total proceeds of the three editions of the volume in which it first appeared.

It is very accommodating as an anthology-piece. It is a poem about animals, it is a poem about Christ, it is a poem about comradeship, it is a 'Shorter Lyric of the Twentieth Century,' it is in rhyme, it is easily learned in schools, and it takes you nowhere quite safely after giving you the feeling that you have been a long distance. Because of the author's alphabetical position it always forms such a pleasant little curtain-raiser to Gray's *Elegy* that the children love it. With a single not serious lapse, a poem fancifully combining natural history with unhappy love, this author has written no other successful anthology-piece, and so remains for the public, in spite of all that has happened since, the author of 'that poem about the Goat.' Emile Cammaerts, the Belgian critic of English poetry, has written of him as 'one of the rising modern religious poets of England' solely on the strength of these lines. A press-cutting recently received informs us:

'The King Alfred School of Hampstead has its own printing press, from which a fascinating anthology has emerged with a squirrel on the cover. It is an anthology of beasts and birds, and it faintly adumbrates what might be collected and embalmed for the delight of naturalists and animal lovers . . .

it is an unconventional and what is called an "experimental" School. Anyway, there are two quotations from Tennyson and all of Gray's lines "On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes" . . . and Mr. W. H. Davies' "Kingfisher" and "Jenny Wren" . . .'

And, of course, the Scapegoat is there (though without permission). Now if that little poem had been left alone it would not have been a bad little poem, though rather muddled and young and silly. But it has gone to the devil now and fancies itself as a perfect lyric, and nothing will bring it to its senses short of putting it back again among the other rather muddled and young and silly pieces of the book which first included it.

The other author of this book has had the similar experience of being represented in popular anthologies only by juvenilia. The editor of a 'Best Poems' anthology has recently written to apologize that the poems he asks for are not her best or most characteristic, but that he fears for the saleability of his collection. This apology does not, however, occur in his preface.

The popular anthology-piece, like the best-seller novel, is usually achieved in the dark; but certain critical regulations can be made for it. It must be fairly regular in form and easily memorized, it must be a new combination of absolutely worn-out

material, it must have a certain unhealthy vigour or langour, and it must start off with a simple and engaging statement of a sentimental character. Somewhere there must be a daring poetical image such as:

'If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields';

or,

'The Master said:
"I have planted the Seed of a Tree,
It shall be strangely fed
With white dew and with red,
And the Gardeners shall be Three,
Regret, Hope, Memory!" '

It must have as many 'subjects' in it as possible, so that it can be easily shifted about by the anthologist from one section of his book to the other wherever fattening is required.

Mr. Yeats' *Lake Isle of Inisfree* is a striking example of a poem that started in innocence, but the progress of which from anthology to anthology suggests that of the 'simple village maiden' of the ballad, 'Victim of a *Squire's Whim*':

'So away she went to London
For to hide her sin and shame,
But she met *another* Squire,
And *again* she lost her name.'

Note the applicability of the ironic end of the ballad:

'In a cottage in the country
Her old honest parents live,
Drinking champagne which she sends them –
But they NEVER can forgive.'

The ordinary reader is inclined to take *Inisfree* for granted as a 'perfect lyric' on the assurance of the critics, and will be surprised, when he examines it out of its anthology setting, to see what a misery it really is. True to anthology-type, it begins with the necessary simple sentimental statement: the Biblical 'I will arise and go unto my father' is padded with the poetical repetition of 'and go':

'I will arise and go now, and go to Inisfree.'

The name 'Inisfree' is a romantic invention, with the syllable 'free' slipped in to help the reader to the conclusion that Inisfree isn't the name of an up-to-date private nursing-home or the prodigal's father's house; but an island refuge, somewhere remote and solitary, in Ireland of the legends.

'And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.'

The smallness of the cabin suggests the complete enervation of the poet who could not even trouble to build himself a roomy retreat, and his complete improvidence against the damp of an Irish winter:

this fatalism is likely to meet with a ready response from the reader who has been already enervated by an extensive course of anthology-browsing. The most miserable touch is the proposal to *build* a cabin which he magically finds already *made* before he reaches the end of the line: suggesting the wish-fulfilment mechanism of the ordinary fatigue-dream. Anthology lyrics are as a matter of fact the only form of poetry that can be rightly compared with the dream, which in general may be regarded as the unchecked running-down of a theme (first suggested in waking life) to a finish either of exhaustion and indecision or of false, because disorderly decision. Dreams are born of the will to disintegrate physically, such poems of the will to disintegrate mentally. In both you find the same surrender to sensuality, a sleepy luxuriousness which is what is commonly meant by 'poetic ecstasy.' And as in dreams one constantly finds oneself making witty jokes which, when one wakes up, do not hold together as jokes at all, so in this type of poetry one gets, as we shall see, the poetic conceit which does not hold together either.

'Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee.'

Nine, because that is a mystic number. How long in extent the bean-rows were, does not appear. The reader is expected to react to the mystic 'nine' and

say, 'Probably some deep Hermetic mystery is intended, or some strange Celtic allegory.' But Mr. Yeats is only dreaming, not exercising thought; this 'nine' is a plain confession of muzziness, justifying our continued line by line prose-analysis. The 'honey-bee,' too, is just a mysterious synonym for the ordinary bee; and when the phrase 'a hive for the honey-bee' is put in apposition to 'bean-rows,' it can only mean that the poet, being too lazy to build his own skips, lets the bees swarm among his beans. But even so, the bees will never make their hive *in* the beans but will choose a hollow tree at some distance from the cabin. Note the ugly clash between *bean* and *bees*.

'And live alone in the bee-loud glade.'

Bee-loud is another would-be poetical phrase, suggesting rather the police-court report: 'Your worship, defendant used improper language while I was at my piano-practice. "Dee you," she said, "you're making too bee-loud a noise for *my* peace and quiet." ' As for the sentiment, it is only a weak repetition of Pope's *Ode to Solitude* and Rogers' *A Wish*, cutting down the simple necessities desired by those earlier sentimentalists to a point far below subsistence level.

'And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of morning to where the
cricket sings.'

Again the poetical repetition concealing the impoverishment of thought. In this second line we have the showy conceit necessary to suggest profundity. Presumably the veils of morning are the dawn-clouds, and the place where the cricket sings is the cabin hearth: 'peace comes down the chimney every morning' is what Yeats really meant. The second half of the first line, because of 'for,' must grammatically explain the first half: because of the slowness of peace as it drops, the poet will be able to catch some of it at least as it comes slowly down the chimney every morning.

'There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.'

This is further extravagance to set off the 'veils of morning.' A-glimmering midnights are rare in Ireland; you wouldn't get linnets in a flock except in the late summer migration which is incompatible with the bee and bean-flower context, nor are linnets particularly active in the evening. But 'midnight,' 'glimmer,' 'evening' and 'linnet' are poetical words and must go in, despite the sense: so is 'purple,' the easiest colour-disguise for feeble workmanship both in painting and poetry (and for that matter in music) – purple began as the colour of kingliness and ended as the colour of anæmia and half-mourning. 'Linnet' is chosen from all the other birds because it

begins with 'L,' and part of the Lullaby quality of the poem is got by an over-proportion of l's to natural requirements. No modern poet, it is safe to say, with the exception of Edmund Blunden and Robert Frost, can distinguish a linnet from any other small bird with a squeaky little voice: but the linnet is as fashionable in contemporary nature-verse as the lark and nightingale used to be.

'I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore.'

This is an attempt to pull the poem together, before it dissolves into mush, by reintroducing the action idea: but not real action, only a repetition of the resolution in the opening line, which has not yet been and indeed never could be translated into practice. The over-alliterative description of noises in the head reads as pathological, especially in view of the poet's previous auditory absorption in the buzzing of bees and the whirring of linnets' wings.

'While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,'

Is there here an antithesis between the roadway and the pavement? If so, it is not clearly made. And how does 'while I stand' square with 'I will arise'? Perhaps he stood on the roadway but sat on the pave-

ment. Why the 'pavement gray?' Is that an inversion for the sake of the rhyme, or does 'gray' refer predicatively to the poet? Why all the 'ay' sounds? Are they intended to create a melancholy urban sound in contrast with the Tennysonian vowel-variation of the preceding line; or is it just carelessness, and is the internal rhyme of 'way' and 'gray' unintentional? It was foolish, anyhow, to mention the 'pavement gray' because this definitely introduces the time-note and accentuates the hopelessness of the fancy.

'I hear it in the deep heart's core.'

What he means is either 'in the core of my heart,' or 'deep in my heart.' But, unable to make the verse fit with only one of these phrases, he combines the two metaphors of *depth* and *centrality* of emotion in a way that defeats his meaning; for he has had to leave out the important word 'my' (it would have made the line end in too many heavy syllables running): so that the possessor of the heart may be anyone or anything. Certainly with whatever qualities the hero of such a simple-life romance might properly adorn himself, depth or centrality of emotion is not one of them (nor ordinary common-sense).

Still, as anthology material *Inisfree* is invaluable. It can be classified under 'Rustic,' 'Mystic,' 'Thoughts from Town,' 'Irish Sentiment,' 'Solitude,' 'Exile,' 'Love of Animals,' 'Natural Religion' and

other anthology headings, and must have proved a little gold-mine to its author. We conclude our criticism by a fugitive epigram:

Inisfree on its Author.

In the Senate house in Dublin
My old honest author sits
Drinking champagne on the proceeds
Of his early loss of wits.

Mr. De la Mare's *Arabia* hangs together better than most anthology pieces because it is *all* muzzy:

'Far are the shades of Arabia
Where the Princes ride at noon
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets
Under the ghost of the moon.
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.'

If we are to trust travellers, there are no shades in Arabia, particularly at noon, except in sand-storms. There are no forests. The moon and stars are not visible at noon: except in the rainy season, which lasts for a week or two, the sky is as bright as brass at noon. The Arabians, princes and all, do most of their riding at night. Flowers do appear in certain districts each spring, but grow low on the ground and are soon burned up.

'Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.'

Streams are not characteristic of Arabia except in the short rainy season, when they rush rather than glide. Lutes are not native to the East in spite of the Authorized Version of the *Book of Daniel* (where they occur with harps, sackbuts and psalteries); and Arabian music is not in any sense sweet like the music of people who live in wooded countries and have singing birds such as the thrush to model it upon, but harsh and bare and monotonous like the desert.

'They haunt me – her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say –
"He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away." '

This poem is a clear proof of the justice of the

comparison that we made between the anthology lyric and the dream, particularly the fatigue-dream. If this poem had been written as poetry and not as poetic ecstacy, the word Arabia would never have been allowed to enter; either an actual place would have been chosen like Cambodia, where much of what he says in the poem applies, or a new name would have been coined. But Mr. De la Mare has had a confused, luxurious dream in which the hackneyed lines 'I'll sing thee songs of Araby and tales of far Cashmere' have developed without any wakeful restraint into this foolish fantasy which combines the silken Prince of Araby with the forests, flowers and silks of Cashmere and identifies the 'songs of Araby' with the Victorian song which celebrates them. The last stanza which admits the craziness of the dream and its distortion of waking life, is the best argument against the poem as a poem and its best ticket of admission into the anthology, where it will continue for many years to *cheat* people of a sigh and *charm* them to a tear. The desire of certain poems to leave the company of their fellows in the individual volume, seek their fortune and finally end their lives as perfect lyrics in a standard popular anthology comes not from enterprise but depravity. 'Why poems leave home' is a story of disgrace rather than of glory. For it can be laid down as a fairly fast rule that any modern piece that has achieved the popularity of *Inisfree* or

Arabia must be functionally half-witted or contain at least one crucial perversion of thought.

Mr. Ralph Hodgson's much anthologized *Bells of Heaven*, with its humanitarian appeal for 'wretched, blind pit-ponies and little hunted hares,' is easily recognizable as a black sheep of the Hodgson menagerie. It offends us certainly to think of pit-ponies being kept down in the dark until they lose the use of their eyes, and so it should; but not disproportionately to other crimes of civilization. Pit-ponies are more lovingly-treated than most of their kind above ground; so that, indeed, the pit-pony often shows fewer signs of wretchedness than the average miner or miner's wife and family. Thus the adjective 'wretched' can only apply fairly to certain particular pit-ponies who happen to be wretched: and the cause of their wretchedness is not specified. We would not insist on the weakness of 'wretched' if it were not matched by the 'little' hunted hares. The hares hunted are not singled out for sport *because* they are usually small in size. Nor should mere size in any case induce pity: mice are much smaller than hares and just as charming: but we destroy them without protest from Mr. Hodgson. Bugs are smaller still. The ugliness of hunting the hare is in the way that its wantonness is sportingly disguised, not in the relative *size* of man and hare: bigness in man does not mean relatively greater speed. The first part of the poem is:

' 'Twould ring the Bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears. . . .'

The conceit about losing one's senses and coming to one's senses bears the whole burden of poeticality for this little piece and must be supposed to be wittily intended: but when one examines the antithesis it falls to pieces like the witticism of the dream examined in daylight. If Parson is at present *in* his senses, and 'people' are *out* of theirs, one would think that all that was necessary was for Parson to kneel down and say the necessary prayers, and for the people thereupon to come to their senses. No, Parson has first to *lose* his senses. But if Parson lost his senses there would be no sensible prayers. Mr. Hodgson probably intends that there is a callousness about Parson in his sensible moods that would allow such things to continue without protest. But if in Parson, why not in the Congregation? Why shouldn't they too lose their senses? If the first part of the antithesis is meant ironically, why not the second? Why should Parson come in for all the irony? And why should the bells of Heaven be

so enthusiastically rung at the receipt of these prayers which are not contrite but definitely indignant, and addressed to the Deity. Must we suppose that the angelic bell-ringers dare to sympathize with 'people' in their new-found indignation, the Deity corresponding in callousness with His representative on earth, Parson? Must the Deity be persuaded to lose His senses in order to preserve the logic of Mr. Hodgson's humanitarianism?

This piece cannot be judged as poetry any more than *Inisfree*; it has to be judged as propaganda verse. The first test of propaganda verse is whether it gives the message clearly: and we have found that 'The Bells of Heaven' are, in Mr. Hodgson's hands, cracked. The next test is whether its remedial suggestions are plausible. Now, there is figurative sense in Shelley's

> 'Men of England, wherefore plough
> For the lords who lay you low?'

There is superficial sense in the temperance hymn beginning:

> 'Cold water is the best of drinks . . .'

There is even a homely if fanciful wisdom in the eighteenth-century catch:

'Slaves to the World should be tossed in a blanket
If I might have my will. . . .'

But all that Mr. Hodgson can suggest to remedy the sufferings of (*a*) caged tigers, (*b*) performing bears and dogs, (*c*) pit-ponies, (*d*) hunted hares, is prayers to God by callous congregations miraculously converted to Sunday humanitarianism. The very inefficacy of the solution makes the poem delightful for anthology readers, for they realize that they are not expected to do anything for the poor animals but read it.

Dr. Bridges' most anthologized poem is another piece of careless carpentry:

'I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.'

Of course he loves all beauteous things. He loves them because he considers them beauteous, or he considers them beauteous because he loves them – it doesn't matter which. Naturally he seeks them and adores them. He seeks them because he adores them or he adores them because he seeks them – it doesn't matter which. Naturally also, this being the next thing on the list, he gives God praise, and he then gives man honour – it doesn't matter which. The question, however, arises: do the beauteous things belong originally to man or to God? Or must God and man litigate?

'I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho' to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.'

'I too' can only mean that Dr. Bridges wishes to be classified as neither God nor man. 'And joy in the making' – by adding a new quality to his proposed creation, not known to God or hasty man, Dr. Bridges suggests an antithesis, i.e. 'God and man make beauteous things and are praised and honoured for them, but get no joy; I, on the other hand, am determined to get joy, although the impermanence of my creations gets me no praise or honour.' The 'dream remembered on waking' is a reminiscence of the seventy-third Psalm.

Of Rupert Brooke's famous *England* sonnet *If I should die think only this of me*, and the remainder of that sequence, the final comment was already made in April, 1915, by Charles Sorley, himself a soldier, killed in action five months later. 'I find it over-praised. He is far too obsessed with his own sacrifice, regarding the going to war of himself (and others) as a highly remarkable sacrificial exploit, whereas it is merely the conduct demanded of him (and others) by the turn of circumstances where non-compliance with this demand would have made life intolerable. He has clothed his attitude in fine

words; but he has taken the sentimental attitude. . . . His early poems are his best.'

And what of Mr. Masefield's 'Cargoes'? It is his most anthologized poem, one that has even been included by Dr. Bridges in his *Chilswell Book of English Verse* (a collection, by the way, that omits Donne, Marvell, Vaughan, Marlowe, Skelton and the three Fletchers, for the benefit of Newbolt, Moore, Lang, Longfellow, Arnold, Kipling, Campbell, R. W. Dixon who has four, Scott who has six, Byron who has eight and Tennyson who has ten pieces included).

'Quinquereme of Nineveh from distant Ophir
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine – '

Nineveh has possibly been linked up with the sea on Jonah's account, Mr. Masefield remembering that the prophet, afraid to pronounce doom on Nineveh, took ship from Tarshish. But Nineveh is hundreds of miles from Palestine, so why a quinquereme of Nineveh should row *home* to Palestine is mysterious. Let us charitably assume that by Nineveh Mr. Masefield means Assyria; but though the Assyrians conquered Palestine and held it for a while, Nineveh was not then the political centre of their empire; moreover the Phœnicians, not the Assyrians, had command of the Palestine coast; and anyhow the route from the land of Ophir to Palestine before the days of the Suez Canal was one no quin-

quereme could take unless it first casually circumnavigated Africa – Hiram's Phœnician fleet was sensibly built on the Red Sea with Solomon's right-of-way permission. And anyhow Nineveh had fallen before quinqueremes were invented.

'With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood and sweet white wine.'

The circumnavigation of Africa is here lengthened by a voyage to the East Indies or perhaps Polynesia in search of sandalwood; but why these Assyrio-Phœnicians were such fools as to go to Ophir (where the gold came from) and to bring back not gold but cedarwood and wine, which are among the chief riches of Palestine, we cannot well make out. The ivory, apes and peacocks are clipped of course from the *Book of Kings* but from a different chapter than the one dealing with Hiram: and they then came sensibly cross-country with the Queen of Sheba. It is strange how many of these perfect lyrics crib their effects from the Bible. There is no finite verb in this stanza.

'Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes.'

Cargo is rather a heavy term for this: consignment would be more plausible. The cargo would have been something bulkier; for instance, cotton, cacao, nuts, silver ingots, hard woods, Jesuits' bark, and so on. Oh, no, we see—

'. . . cinnamon and gold moidores.'

Well, then the bulk of the cargo was cinnamon: the galleon was coming home from the Isthmus of Panama (?) after unsuccessfully trying to plant a cargo principally consisting of cinnamon (from Ceylon) on the Mexicans. But why in the world were moidores among the cargo? Again some unsuccessful commercial transaction is indicated. The Spaniards took their chests of coined gold to the New World and were told, 'No, thank you, we have plenty of that yellow metal here.' Which so chilled their stately hearts that they did not think of asking for some ordinary unworked bars of gold in exchange for steel knives, guns and other European manufactures. But they got the jewels all right, perhaps in barter for a small amount of cinnamon; unless these also came from the East Indies with the cinnamon. There is no finite verb in this stanza either.

'Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware and cheap tin trays.'

And still no finite verb; so we are evidently intended to hang up these three nautical sketches on the wall and compare them. The main differences in the three exhibits are as follows: Fig. 1, Oars; Fig. 2, Sails; Fig. 3, Steam. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, Romantic, scented cargo, long calm voyages; Fig. 3, Prosaic cargo, short voyages, dull travelling. The natural deductions to be drawn from these tabulated contrasts can only be that improvements in methods of marine transport do not necessarily make for long, pleasurable voyages. Which is not a sublime thought; and we therefore look farther for a meaning of greater subtlety. The Tyne coal and road-rails give the clue. Where was the coaster taking them to in the *mad* March days? Think a moment! Fig. 1, Cedar and wine to Palestine; Fig. 2, Moidores to Spain. Fig. 3? Why, of course, iron and coal back to Newcastle again after a rattling voyage round the British isles; in the course of which the cheap tin trays were re-imported into South Wales at a somewhat dearer price. And the moral? Is it the 'Changeless Mystery of the Sea'? Perhaps we may take a couplet of Mr. Masefield's scandalously out of its context and refer it to the Sea:

> 'All I have learned, and can learn, show me this:
> How scant, how slight, my knowledge of her is.'

A frequently anthologized poem of Mr. Humbert Wolfe's begins:

Morning.

'If all of us were doomed to die
When we had lived a minute,
I think I know what Anne and I
Would wish to happen in it.'

An archly expressed fancy which may be rationalized as follows: 'If a mysterious disease or functional failure were to destroy all human beings one minute after birth, then I and Anne' – the poet's daughter as we read elsewhere – but of course there would not be a daughter Anne, there would not be time, or Mr. Wolfe would have to waste several seconds of his minute begetting her – anyhow 'I and my daughter Anne, mysteriously co-eval in babyhood, with our first comforters in our mouths and our first swaddling clothes about us, would like to have what happen?'

The poem continues:

'We'd let our sixty seconds run
Where chestnut-blossoms harden
Some early morning, at Kensington,
When Spring is in the Gardens.'

And that is all. After all the agony of this tragical proposition we are left with only an arithmetical formula, which we may be expected to have already known – that one minute is the equivalent of sixty seconds – and a little bit of mystical natural history

which we could not be expected to have already known. For chestnut-blossoms do not really harden. The buds soften as they turn to blossom and the blossoms soften further as they wither and fall off, and then the fruit hardens. Whether or not this mysterious phenomenon, the hardening of the blossom, is more noticeable in the Gardens in the early morning before the gates open when Peter Pan is still piddling about on his lawful errands, the context does not make clear.

Grammatically, the only conclusion is that these baby-folk, if put in the unfortunate position of having to meet their God only sixty seconds after having taken leave of Him, would choose to be born under a spreading chestnut-tree and would spend their time each with one eye on the second-hand of a watch, the other on the chestnut-blossom, to note exactly how much hardening took place in their life-time of research. They would then report their observations to St. Peter. But perhaps what Mr. Wolfe really means is that if you let sixty seconds run, among the perambulators, where the brain softens, some early morning at Kensington, when spring is in the Gardens, you are likely to achieve a perfect modern lyric.

Modern American anthology-pieces are not quite so successful as their British counterparts, because the Free Verse movement has made it difficult to use worn-out material in quite so hypnotic a manner,

and the true bad-vigour quality only comes with rhyme. Still, Mr. Sandburg manages successfully enough in his 'Cool Tombs.'

'When Abraham Lincoln was shovelled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.'

'Shovelled' is intended as a confidential colloquialism, 'tombs' as a poetical enlargement of singular into plural. But the colloquial and the poetical obstruct each other: the verse reads as though poor President Lincoln had been assassinated with dynamite and had to be distributed with a shovel among the different state-cemeteries. There, such as it is, the poem really ends, but it is protracted as an anthology-piece by the old ballad device of three parallel statements and a conclusion – 'I said it once, I say it again, what I say three times' (in slightly different ways) 'is true.'

'And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.'

Sandburg here cites a second typical American citizen who has undergone multiple burial. To complete the mystic trinity we must search out an inevitable third to this great-hearted and hard-headed pair. John Brown? Virginia Dare? Barbara

Frietchie? Uncle Remus? Who else is a dead American?

'Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?'

Evidently Pocahontas' body (since Mr. Sandburg puts it as a question) has a possible sense of memory which Lincoln and Grant (or their bodies) lack. Is it because she was a woman and, though respectably married, of middle age, and a mother, beautiful still? Or because she was buried not in America but in a London church? It is interesting to note as an example of the practical effect of the bad poem that there has been a patriotic movement started for exhuming Pocahontas and transferring her to America. Will she wonder? Will she hell! By this time Carl Sandburg himself no longer remembers. Though he has not yet been shovelled into the cool tombs.

'Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.'

The question 'Are the lovers losers?' means just what? Losers in comparison with the hero-cheerers and the grocery-buyers? Or losers in comparison with

Lincoln, Grant and Pocahontas? Or losers in regard to love? The supplementary question is equally indistinct. Does it mean 'Do any others get more than the lovers get when the lovers are in the cool tombs?' Or does it mean 'Do any others get more than the lovers get when they themselves are in the cool tombs?' But the anthology reader doesn't mind; he is fagged out by his own cash and collaterals, he is too weary to remember his Country's heroes or even that women are beautiful. In fact, he too might just as well be . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs . . . like Pocahontas, Carl Sandburg, and everybody else.

One of Miss Edna St. Vincent Millay's most notorious anthology-pieces begins:

> 'I shall go back again to the bleak shore
> And build a little shanty on the sand
> In such a way that the extremest band
> Of brittle seaweed will escape my door
> But by a yard or two, and nevermore
> Shall I return to take you by the hand.
> I shall be gone to what I understand
> And happier than I ever was before.'

This ends the octave of the sonnet. It is really extraordinary how many poets, when feeling thoroughly low-spirited, revert to childhood and think of going out into the wilder parts of the world and building a *tiny tiny* house JUST TO SHOW HOW I HATE YOU ALL, and how constantly they choose to be near large

sheets of water, not to drink or to wash in, but just to give them that nice melancholy feeling that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century anthology lyricists used to get more directly by crawling about in country graveyards. Miss Millay however is more careful than Mr. Yeats in particularizing her little shanty. She says nothing about it that sounds ridiculous except to those frivolous readers who find her 'brittle seaweed' amusing just because it is a piece of exact and cheerful natural history ('the farther from the sea, the more brittle is the seaweed found') incongruous to the atmosphere of bleak despair the poem is supposed to convey. Is the brittle seaweed to serve as thatch for the shanty; as bedding; as food? They trust not. Similarly they find Miss Millay's careful calculation of the neap-tide limit even more diverting than Mr. Yeats' romances about linnets and bean-rows. For 'Inisfree' might one day slowly settle to the bottom of the lake – cabin, poet and all, or be engulfed by a Piastre (not the Turkish coin, but the fabulous Irish lake-monster), or spirited away by the Sidhe (pronounced 'Shee' in a footnote) to Hy Brazil (where the nuts do not come from); and they wouldn't laugh, or not very much. But if one late September evening a big big BIG wave did come and go splash against Miss Millay's *tiny tiny* house and she got her shoes and stockings wet, and the fire was put out, and the roof began to sag, now that would be something to laugh at.

'The love that stood a moment in your eyes,
The words that lay a moment on your tongue
Are one with all that in a moment dies,
A little under-said and over-sung;
But I shall find the sullen rocks and skies
Unchanged from what they were when I was young.'

The poem, then, is apparently a rhetorical spite piece, a goodbye from a woman to a man who has only loved her momentarily. Notwithstanding her assurance that she is going to be happier than she ever was before, we are not convinced that she really loves the sea or living in a shanty on the seashore. (All she can see in this life is the sullen rocks and skies and seaweed.) What she seems to want is to be thoroughly miserable, so miserable that she'll make him sorry, and repentant; and perhaps he will come back. Our little lady, we begin to feel, is just playing a game. She is teasing: she will build her shanty so near the sea that she will always be on the verge of being washed away, but always there the next morning to go on teasing. And the nasty sandfleas that breed in the seaweed will come right in at her front door and make her more miserable and him sorrier. But evidently she is used to that, having lived in a little shanty when she was a child; or perhaps in a converted hulk like Peggotty's in *David Copperfield*. So it is easier than it seems. She left her home early

in life and went to the city, perhaps, where she took him by the hand. And he liked it for a little while, but then got tired: for she was only a simple fishermaid and they had nothing in common after all. What seems to have happened is that she went on holding his hand; and he *said* very little and she *sang* a great deal, too much, perhaps – he didn't like poetry and was really simpler than she. So she gave it up, or seemed to give it up; and ran away, or seemed to run away. Or doesn't the poem mean this at all? Or what does it mean? Or isn't it supposed to mean anything? Or is it supposed to mean just anything, so that the reader can make what he wants of it? And is this why it is a perfect lyric? And what is a perfect lyric anyway?

There will be indignant protests against our treatment of these perfect lyrics 'as if they were prose': for there is a popular superstition that a poem, like the legendary female mind, is charming because it is illogical; that it need not tally with itself (come out right), or, as the Germans say in a single word which the English language badly needs, that it need not 'stimm.' Whereas it is prose which does not need to stimm, or needs to stimm only in a few directions: it can use dead metaphors, toy with false analogies, and can record a succession of events bound together only by space or time propinquity. It describes something; it does not make something. So that any means by which it may strengthen the descrip-

tion will pass. It is the idea not the thing itself that matters. Poetry must stimm in all directions: every metaphor must be alive and reconciled to its neighbours; analogies must work out precisely; its events must have so complete interdependence that a single idle word would spoil the cohesion of a poem. Poets unable to make everything 'stimm' conceal their shortcomings in a facile artistry. Indeed, a cleverly metrified poem is scarcely asked to stimm even in an elementary prose sense, let alone in a poetic sense.

Chapter VI

'BEST POEMS'

THE expressed critical aim of the anthology has come to be the sifting out of the 'best poems.' And the material used by the anthologist has come to be poems written especially to supply the demand for them. His 'best poem' is the best of a best-poem type. We have then two general classes into which poems fall, the best-poem class, including good and bad 'best poems,' and the large indefinable class of poems not of the best-poem type. This latter class is left largely to its own fate. But certain kindly provisions are made for the most deserving of the rejected 'best poems'. Many find their way into Fireside Anthologies, consoled by the company of a few decrepit veterans, such as Lamb's *Old Familiar Faces* and Hood's *Song of the Shirt*. An ingenious way of disposing of them has been employed by Mr. C. Lewis Hind in his volume *One Hundred Second Best Poems*. He begins well by discussing the Fireside poem, the poem that makes an irresistible appeal to the heart of the great uneducated public and is always asking for its author and for missing lines in the literary pages of the Sunday

papers. A good example he gives is Cecil Frances Alexander's:

'By Nebo's lonely mountain
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave . . .';

and Charlotte Bickersteth Ward's:

'Child of My Love, lean hard
And let me feel the pressure of thy care.
I know thy burden, child; I shapèd it . . .' etc.;

and Thomas Bayly's:

'She wore a wreath of roses that night when first we met:
Her lovely face was smiling beneath her curls of jet.'

But these typical instances of parlour verse are curiously confused with vigorous old rhymes which are not in the competitive best-poem tradition at all:

' 'Tis well to be merry and wise,
'Tis well to be honest and true,
'Tis well to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new';

and

' 'Tis a very good world to live in,
To lend or to spend or to give in,
But to beg or to borrow or get a man's own
'Tis the very worst world that ever was known';

and

'Love me little, love me long
Is the burden of my song.
Love that is too hot and strong
Burneth soon to waste.
Still, I would not have thee cold,
Not too backward or too bold:
Love that lasteth till 'tis old
Fadeth not in haste. . . .'

Why these are here classified as second-best rather than best poems is that they were not written for the sophisticated 'best' reader: Mr. Hind therefore includes them, disregarding their quality, in the hope that they will vulgarly please the second-best reader. But even in his well-meaning snobbery he is not consistently generous in giving his public what it wants. For he has funked putting in Sir Henry Newbolt's *Play up! play up! and play the game* and Mr. Kipling's *If* and Wordsworth's *We are Seven*; the first, as he admits, because he hadn't the courage, the second because 'Kipling – is Kipling,' and Wordsworth's *We are Seven* because Wordsworth is 'among the Immortals.' No such courtesy prevented him from

including Sidney Dobell's *Tommy's Dead*, a poem rather marred in the making but not a second-best poem or yet a 'best,' and one by Gerard Manley Hopkins, a poet who sometimes makes Wordsworth look like a real second-best poet; nor from setting the unpretentious Negro spiritual *Swing low, sweet Chariot* side by side with the farcical wedding-hymn of Mrs. Gurney's *O perfect Love, all human thought transcending*. Mr. Hind closes his preface by saying that, after all, since a Second Best Poem is one that the reader likes not because he has been told to but because he really does, a few of the one hundred examples of *Second Best Poems* should be really included in an anthology of Best Poems. In other words, Mr. Hind suggests, though the anthologist's first object is to flatter his readers that they are 'best' readers, they should perhaps be made a little comfortable with a few real favourites, such as:

'God and I in space alone
And Nobody else in view.'

He has given away the secret that the 'best' reader is a homely second-best reader at heart.

The point about Best and Second Best is really this (and we are grateful to Mr. Hind for illustrating it so conclusively), that though poetry which submits to a public standard may be appropriately judged by this standard and given blue and red tickets as first-class and second-class, for poetry that

is not thus dapperly professional there must be a separate standard for each poem, a standard supplied by the poem itself. Now, the anthology standard would be convenient and just if applied only to poems which properly fall under it. It serves for the sub-logical 'best poem' (the perfect modern lyric), which is held together by pseudo-magical sleight-of-pen; and for the 'best poem' which is held together by common prose logic. Take, for example, Kipling's *If*. As M. André Maurois has shown, it translates easily into French and makes a better poem there than in English. Therefore, since French poetry is inflated prose,[1] *If* must have originally been in English a mere prose fancy without any poetic construction; therefore again, a poem to which the 'best poem' standard may properly apply itself – a professional effort. But by applying itself to *all* poems this standard is capable of classifying as first-class a poem which is not professionally classifiable: as with Wordsworth's poem on the death of Lucy, which, though rated as first-class, should in all justice rather be put out of the running. Because of its subject, because of its picturesque last two lines, and because it was written by Wordsworth, however, it is generally included in most *Best Poems* anthologies:

[1] Mr. Humbert Wolfe, who defines all poetry as 'prose in flight'(the *New Criterion*), should have all his own poetry immediately flown into France.

'A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

'No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.'

As a prose fancy this poem is confused and illogical; and if it were translated into French it would be no poem at all. The contrast between Lucy's once active evasion of the touch of earthly years and her present passive acquiescence in earth's diurnal course is the main argument. But from the prose view it may be facetiously pointed out that Lucy never in her most active days could have gone to counteract the daily rolling of the earth. The details are even more illogical than the main argument. Apparently what Wordsworth has in his mind is that 'I thought once that she was non-human in a spiritual sense, but now she is dead I find her non-human in the very opposite sense.' But all the words have got misplaced. 'Spirit' has got attached to Wordsworth when it should go with Lucy; 'no human' likewise. There is a false comparison made between 'A slumber did my spirit seal' and 'She neither hears nor sees.' 'Trees' is an irrelevant climax to 'rocks and stones.' 'Thing' should not qualify the

first Lucy but should be with the second Lucy among the rocks and stones. As a French poem it would run, more logically, something like this:

'A slumber sealed my *human fears*
For her mortality:
Methought *her spirit* could withstand
The touch of earthly years.

'Yet now her spirit fails, she is
Less sentient than a *tree*,
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and *things*.'

Indeed, if we could get the rhymes to match the revised sense, this could properly be rated, according to the 'best poem' standard, as a first-class poem. The fact is, this poem, judged by its own idiosyncratic standard, has great uncanonical beauty: it is not logical, but neither is it sub-logical. The poet has not induced a professionally confused, clap-trap frame of mind in which to write a fitting (but false) poem like Jonson's *Epitaph on the Dowager Countess of Pembroke*. He is obviously writing a private, not a public poem, which is under no obligation to be taphologically fitting. It has rather a supra-logical harmony, by identity of the theme, which shows the inability of the mind to face the actual reality of death, with the expression, which shows an inability to get the right words to pair off in a logical prose manner. Had the mind been able to face lyrically

the fact of Lucy's death and had the words been illogically placed; or had the mind not been able to face the fact and had the words been logically placed – it would not have been as true a poem as it now is in its distortion. That is, though at first we may judge the poem as bad because it is not 'the best words *in the best order*,' according to Coleridge's definition, the *best order* in the logical prose sense would have been as false here as a more professional disorder. A poem like this, then, slight as it is, and false as the bulk of Wordsworth's work is, should not be submitted to the indignity of being put in company with Kipling's *If*, on the one hand, or Jonson's *Epitaph* on the other.[1]

[1] The question of the relation of logic to poetry, and especially of the difference between French and English poetry in this respect, is discussed by Albert Thibaudet in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, January, 1928. English lyrical poetry, he says, is far removed from everything logical, French lyrical poetry has an oratorical sympathy with logic—'*le flot oratoire roule sur la pente de la logique*.' But he makes no distinction between sub-logical and supra-logical oppositions to prose logic; between the pseudo-magical 'best poems' of Poe and Swinburne, for example, and the 'stimming' though illogical poems of Shelley and Shakespeare at their best. Mallarmé, reacting under English and American influence against what M. Thibaudet calls '*l'intermédiaire oratoire, didactique, logique, qui s'interpose toujours plus ou moins entre le poète français et la réalité poétique*,' improvised in the illogical Poe manner rather than in the illogical Shakespeare

The anthology-habit betrays anthologists into cataloguing even poets who never entered their poems for literary competition. So Mr. Louis Untermeyer, in his *Modern American Poetry*, prints large quantities of Emily Dickinson, who avoided publishing anything in her life-time, and calls her 'possibly the greatest woman-poet,' 'of the colossal substance of Immortality.' He says that she wrote chiefly on four topics, 'Love, Nature, Life, Death,' and agrees with another critic, Mr. Aiken, that she was incorrigibly perverse in her refusal of the accepted technique of verse, that '*one even suspects that these lapses were deliberate*' (!!). Mr. Untermeyer deals in much the same way in his *Modern British Poetry* with Gerard Manley Hopkins, who was as reserved and even secretive about his poems as Emily Dickinson; no poem of his appearing until thirty years after his death. He finds in Hopkins 'verbal excesses, irritating oddities' and agrees with Dr. Bridges, Hopkins' editor, that 'the beauty in his least peculiar poems makes it lamentable that he died when to judge by his latest work he was beginning to castigate his art into a more reserved style. . . . For even in the cloudiest of his poems there is a

manner. But as it is not in the French nature to be supra-logical, so also they fail as sub-logicians: their perfect modern lyrics are only scientific, synthetic imbecilities, their sleight-of-prose is logical, not pseudo-magical. For better or for worse no French poet could have achieved the sub-realistic immateriality of *Inisfree* or *Eldorado*.

splendour, a rush of rhyme, a cataract of colour attained by *scarcely any of his clearer-speaking contemporaries*.' Mr. Hind showed a clumsy appreciation of Hopkins' proud shyness in hiding him among the Second Best poems. Mr. Untermeyer, who is a business-man rather than a sentimentalist, pulls him out on the Best Poem stage and makes him yield Best Poem returns. But though the anthologist can exploit almost any material to his ends, he prefers regular best-poem talent. He wants intelligence, not genius. In comparison with talented writing most works of genius are unintelligent from the anthology viewpoint. And as so many people nowadays have intelligence and, having it, use it to their profit, the anthologist is not obliged to make many raids on genius.

Perhaps the first test of talent in the anthology lyricist is whether he can do his turn in no less than eight and no more than thirty lines – the daily newspaper and the weekly literary journal are the trying-out places. For the more solid 'best poem' a longer unit is stipulated, from about fifty to two hundred lines; and the trying-out places for these are the academic monthlies and quarterlies. This latter type is the declamatory as opposed to the lyrical poem; it takes a central argument through a number of rhetorical digressions and clinches it with a felicitous lyrical summary. It is sober, deliberate oratory rather than light-headed variety – the dull, weighty parts

of the anthology programme. Whether ode, elegy, descriptive or narrative verse or philosophic disquisition, the method is the same: '*le flot oratoire roule sur la pente de la logique*.'[1] An exercise in this type might be helpful.

The title proposed is a fine eye-taker – 'He Died To-day.' The subject is a scrap of a clay pot recently found by archæologists in the sands of Egypt, and dating about A.D. 300. It was apparently sent by a runner as a sort of telegram between two unknown persons. It says simply 'He died to-day,' and may be found in the Bodleian Library at Oxford exposed in a glass case.

This makes an ideal subject for a long anthology poem. There is in it the suppressed story element referable to the reader and waiting to be enlarged in the manner of Edwin Arlington Robinson in his *Man against the Sky*. (Who was he? Where was he going? Was he really a man? Could it have been this? Or that? Or the other? And then the end.) The central argument is: 'Here is Death; a brief, poignant message that does not actually hurt you because it is remote in time and place, yet a symbol of the Universal Sorrows of Man, so that it may stand for a tragedy of yours that is not poignant to other people. How little do we know of other people's affairs, and yet how much: even after a lapse of centuries!'

The scheme is the same, whatever the period-

[1] See preceding footnote.

mannerisms. The introductory stanza would run 'I loitered in a dim Museum when suddenly my wandering eye, etc., etc. I felt chill, etc., etc. And walking home through the quiet streets I asked myself: "Who was he?" . . . when to-day . . .

'. . . to-day is always to-day . . .
. . . Clay is always clay . . .'

And you go on to say (in the second stanza): 'Who sent the message to whom?'

. . . 'Perhaps' (in the third stanza) 'it was a dissolute Alexandrian waiting for the death of his rich uncle, now sending this joyful message to his creditors or to his mistress.'

'Perhaps' (the fourth stanza) 'it was a new-born child; his nurse sent this message to his absent father.'

'Perhaps' (the fifth stanza) 'a wife sent this message to the mistress of her husband, who was about to desert her. Perhaps she poisoned him in jealousy.'

'Perhaps' (the sixth stanza) 'it was sent by the Master of the Prison to a man's wife, when she sent him the Pardon that she had got from the Governor at the price of her chastity.'

'Perhaps' (the seventh stanza) 'it was sent by the Merchant to the mother of his apprentice, an only son. She had heard a rumour that the lad was killed falling from a ladder three weeks before. He died *to-day*. (!!!)

This last 'perhaps,' being dramatically the most effective, may end the sequence. In the eighth stanza comes the lyrical summary.

Now cast this subject in its simplest possible form: for instance use the nearest Western equivalent to the *hokku*, the most usual short form in Japanese anthologies. The *hokku* has only seventeen syllables and is arranged in lines of five, seven, and five syllables apiece. Something like this:

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A shard of Nile clay
I found, in haste antiquely
Scrawled 'He died to-day.'

And we have the bare but adequate poetical sketch to which our hypothetical 'best poem' may be reduced – the least exceptionable inflation of the original prose idea.

Now to consider an actual longish 'best poem.' A subject that immediately occurs is Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, which Hallam thought 'perhaps the most perfect ode in the English language':

'The rainbow comes and goes
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair:

The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.'

The prose idea is fully contained in the title; what is the legitimate length of the poetical sketch? In this stanza, whose verbose mock-simplicity is typical of all the other stanzas, we have a topic last line (an inflated quotation from the Old Testament) qualified by five parallel poetical commonplaces. One such would have made the stanza merely a 'lyrical' passage; five puff it into philosophy. Or if Wordsworth had set himself the task of rendering an honest poetical sketch of his prose idea, he could have justified one of these commonplaces in the clear antithesis it established between itself and the topic line. But the relevancy of 'The sunshine is a glorious birth,' for example, is compromised in advance by the sentimental dishonesty of the six preceding lines and further by the make-weight line following it. If we had the sunshine line by itself 'birth' would have to go, no longer supported by the general confusion of the coming and going rainbow and the constant rose and the bare heavens on a moony night and the fair waters and the beautiful waters on a starry night – in which it passes unchallenged; or if it remained it would have to square itself with 'passed away' by an acknowledgment of the fact that sunshine passes

away, and also that it is renewed; it could not at any rate stand as an idle word. In the same way 'glorious' would have to go, as merely the end flourish of a promiscuous adjectival sequence; unless it squared itself accurately with 'glory.' This may seem a somewhat wanton and futile indictment of a well-entrenched 'best poem.' If it were patiently sustained throughout the whole poem, if all rhetorical falsities were struck out, all gratuitous cataloguing, all irrelevant conceits and all plagiarisms, very little, it is true, would get by. The point of disagreement is, whether or not it is better to pass over the solecisms of our 'best' poetry in order to have any poetry at all. Granted even that we were anxious to save what we could, just for the sake of having poetry, and that it were possible here to rescue the poem from the solid masonry of imitation Milton and Dryden in which it is immured, the result would probably be another Vaughan's *The Retreate* – or rather *The Retreate* in sixteen lines instead of thirty-two.

Or take Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. Here are two typical stanzas:

'And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;

The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

'Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud,
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;
In vain, with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.'

Milton is a more finished orator than Wordsworth; but underneath the swaddlings of mythological quaintness there is to be found only a rather tuneless Christmas carol. The first stanza makes it quite plain what Milton was at:

'. . . Nature in awe to Him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize.
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.'

Occasionally an oratorical 'best' poem appears in lyric length, as T. E. Brown's ten-line *My Garden*:

'A Garden is a lovesome thing, God wot.
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot –

The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not –
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign.
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.'

This might be hokku'd into:

'There is no God.' 'Fool!
He walks my lovesome garden
In the evening cool.'

From which, if we were not interested in saving the pieces, just for the sake of having poetry, it could be coué'd away altogether, God wot.

Chapter VII

POETRY AND ANTHOLOGY LABELS

THE salad-mixing of a popular anthology is intended to give the reader a composite picture of the poetic world. There must be flowers, birds, landscapes, and in contrast a few grim glimpses of urban life, and a balanced representation of emotions new and old. A lark-poem, for instance, would be included not because it was a good poem but because it was a good poem about a lark. It would be chosen not so much as a particularly distinguished contribution by a given author as a particularly distinguished example from a hypothetical lark-anthology.

Imagine such a lark-anthology, compiled, say, by Mr. Hartog as a companion volume to his *Kiss in Poetry*. Let us give him a start with the ancient Irish *Song of Summer*:

> '. . . A timorous, tiny, persistent little fellow
> Sings at the top of his voice,
> The lark sings clear tidings.
> Surpassing summer time of delicate hues!'

Skelton's

'The lark with his long toe,
The spink, the martinet also.'

Lyly's

'what is't now we hear?
None but the lark so shrill and clear,
How at heaven's gate she claps her wings!'

Shakespeare's

'Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings!'

Henry Lawes'

'Swift through the yielding air I glide.
. . . Teach the young lark his lesson out,
Who early as the day is born
Sings his shrill anthem to the rising corn.'

Pope's lines from *Windsor Forest*:

'He lifts a tube and levels with his eye.
Straight a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.
Oft as the mounting larks their notes prepare
They fall and leave their little lives in air.'

Wordsworth's

'Mount, daring warbler . . .'

and

'They pay the price who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home';

and his earlier *Up With Me!* in which the lark is called the 'drunken lark' and made a symbol of irresponsible gladness;

Shelley's

'Hail to thee, blithe spirit,
Bird thou never wert . . .'

Clare's '*Above the russet clods* . . .' ending

'. . . Oh, were they but a bird!
So think they, while they listen to its song
And smile and fancy and so pass along:
While its low nest, moist with the dews of morn,
Lies safely, with the leveret, in the corn.'

The lark-anthology is well on its way already. But when it is done what has it accomplished? Nothing except to collect a stock of larks for future popular anthologists to turn over in search of a suitable specimen for their Composite Poetic World. There is no common factor in these poems except the word 'lark': it would be as reasonable to garner all the poems beginning 'There is a . . .' e.g. 'There is a flower, the lesser Celandine'; 'There is a garden in her face'; 'There is a lady sweet and kind'; 'There is a glory on the apple-boughs'; 'There is a pigeon in the apple-tree'; 'There is a sweet music here that softer falls.' Indeed the 'There is a . . .' poems are probably more closely allied than the lark poems. All

that one can get from the lark-anthology is a number of critical notes such as that in ancient Ireland the lark was not yet a literary bird, nor in England in the reign of Henry VIII, but grew so in Elizabethan times; that Shakespeare in need of a song for one of his comedies was not above stealing from Lyly; that the seventeenth century made the lark purely literary; that the eighteenth century had less feeling for birds as birds than even the seventeenth, regarding them alternately as food and incidental music; that the early nineteenth century sentimentalized the lark as a moral or philosophical symbol, and paid no attention to the reminder of a man like Clare, who knew larks personally and not through literature, that after all larks were larks (as they had been in ancient Ireland). It is a socio-literary-critical work, not a book of poems.

Poetry has no intrinsic categories, though for its arrangement in volume form the author-category is obviously necessary; or, in the case of fugitive poetry, the period-category. The author-category, however, is made to support the anthology-system if the author can possibly be represented as a specialist in some poetic department. The period-category is generally perverted in the same sort of way to exploit some specialized historical appeal. Thus Mr. Norman Ault's *Elizabethan Lyrics* might have passed as a legitimate anthology if it had merely included loose anonymous and virtually anonymous

pieces strictly of the Elizabethan Period. Likewise Mr. Massingham's *Seventeenth Century English Verse*, which contains a number of fugitive pieces for which we can be very grateful, such as:

> 'Hic jacet John Shorthose,
> Sine hose, sine shoes, sine breeches:
> Qui fuit, dum vixit,
> Sine goods, sine lands, sine riches';

and the catch:

> 'The Wise Men were but seven, ne'er more shall be for me.
> The Muses were but nine, the Worthies three times three,
> And three merry boys, and three merry boys are we.'

Between Mr. Ault's period (1558–1603) and Mr. Massingham's period (1600–1700) there is only a Debatable-land of three years: that is, if each had made a true anthology of his set period they would have together tidied up the poetic scraps of a century and a half. But Mr. Ault reaches anthologistically forward to William Basse's panegyric on Shakespeare, written in 1616, which also appears in Mr. Massingham's book; and Mr. Massingham reaches anthologistically back to Donne for love poems like 'Go and catch a falling star!' that he wrote in the 1590's and which are also used by Mr. Ault. 'Period' to the anthologist is an appealing

trade label rather than a genuine means of classification.

The political category is a refinement of the period-category. Morley's *The King and the Commons* is an anthology of Cavalier and Puritan pieces, divided up like a game of French-and-English, with Milton, Marvell, Wither, Bunyan on one side, and Suckling, Crashaw, Davenant, Waller on the other. Marvell – to point to only one discrepancy – could only be properly represented in a political anthology by both Roundhead and Royalist pieces. He kept on good terms with Cromwell, but remained independent. His *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* is more Royalist, indeed, than Puritan. But the joke turns against the anthologist not the poet when we find Marvell's 'To make a final conquest of all me' and Wither's 'Shall I, wasting in despair' registered as Puritan poems.

Next, the ethnological category. We have Mrs. Sharp's *Lyra Celtica*[1] built up on a popular theory of the consanguinity of Bretons, Manx, Cornish, Irish, Scots, Welsh: which are now distinguishable as racially either P Celt (Brythonic) or Q Celt (Goidelic) – two very antipathetic races – or casual mixtures of these and other races. Even as a muddled survey of muddled P and Q there might be scientific justification for *Lyra Celtica*, leaving poetry out of the

[1] And more recently another Celtic Anthology by Mrs. Rhys on the same lines.

question: but an unfortunate desire for symmetry led the editor to fatten the Manx section with what she calls 'Anglo-Celts' like T. E. Brown and Sir Hall Caine, and the Cornish with Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and Riccardo Stephens. These in the same book with Deirdre's *Lament for the Sons of Usnach* and Taliesin's *Song of the Wind*! Ethnology is clearly too complicated to provide a criticism for poetry and poetry too complicated to provide a criticism for ethnology. But pseudo-ethnology of the Pan-Celtic type agrees well enough with the anthology-system, which is as crude a caricature of poetry as such movements are of ethnology.

The regional category of poetry returns as twisted an image as the pseudo-ethnological category. A poet is not a poet because of his origin, nor even a special kind of poet because he has had a special kind of origin. So long as the language used is more or less the same there may be a greater affinity between a poet born and living in, say, Dayton, Ohio, who is not wilfully Daytonian, and a poet born and living in, say, Oxford, but not wilfully Oxonian, than between the former and any Dayton-proud poet, or between the latter and any Oxford-proud poet. The only excuse for a regional anthology is where the language and psychology of the region selected varies very considerably from those of other regions, and where an accumulation of uncollected poetry exists which may be regarded as the product of the region

rather than of individual poets. For instance, 'Manchester Poetry' is a false category because it implies that there is an inherent cultural force in Manchester that absorbs individual authorship and that enables one to distinguish a Manchester poem from one composed in Liverpool. Whereas the reason of such an anthology would only be that the commercial enterprise of Manchester is expected to make the anthology saleable in two or three editions. Northern English as opposed to Southern English poetry is a different matter: poetry composed in Northern English (usually called 'Scots') by people to whom Southern English is not the ordinary spoken language, is very different in character from Southern English poetry; and this difference is most clearly marked in the fugitive and anonymous pieces for which the anthology is the natural home. The following rhyme, even though transposed into Southern English, betrays its origin at once:

'There was a piper had a cow
And had no hay to give her:
He played a tune upon his pipes
"Consider, old cow, consider!"

'That old cow considered well
And promised the piper money,
Would he but play his other tune
"Corn Rigs are bonny." '

Whereas the following verses by Miss Elinor Wylie, an American writer, are only Northern English in decoration – Southern English in feeling:

'Now haud your tongue, ye haverin' coward,
For whilst I'm young I'll go flounced and flowered,
In lutestring striped like the strings o' a fiddle,
Wi' gowden girdles aboot my middle.

'My silks are stiff wi' patterns o' siller,
I've an ermine hood like the hat o' a miller,
I've chains o' coral like rowan berries,
An' a cramoisie mantle that cam' frae Paris.'

Before compiling an anthology of dialect poetry a careful distinction must be made between dialect by inheritance and dialect by sentimental adoption. Mr. John Buchan's *Northern Muse* succeeds well enough in including poems only Northern English by inheritance. But it also includes poems by Scott, Stevenson and others to whom, though Scots by birth, Southern English was the normal literary language; and poems by other well-known authors, such as Burns, whose works stand by themselves and should not be (as in the disfiguring subject-category employed by Mr. Buchan) set side by side with poems by authors whose works could not stand by themselves, or with the anonymous anthology-pieces in which Northern English is very rich. Of these *The Northern Muse* contains so many that the

faults which it shares with all popular anthologies are more easily forgiven. Here are two pieces from *The Northern Muse*:

'Kiss'd yestreen and kiss'd yestreen
Up the Gallowgate, down the Green:
I've woo'd wi' lords, and woo'd wi' lairds,
I've mool'd wi' carles and mell'd wi' cairds,
I've kiss'd wi' priests – 'twas done i' the dark
Twice in my gown and thrice in my sark;
But priest nor lord nor loon can gie
Sic kindly kisses as he gae me';

and

'Happy the craw
That biggs in the Trotten shaw
And drinks o' the Water o' Dye –
For nae mair may I.'

Much the same may be said about Mr. Padraic Colum's *Anthology of Irish Verse*, which is well-edited, with notes, and is intended to call attention to the qualities characteristic of Anglo-Irish verse. Mr. Colum likewise makes use of subject-categories, mixes the individual with the not strongly individual poets, and sets the work of men like Moore and Swift, to whom Southern English was the normal literary language, next to popular ballads like *The Night before Larry was Stretched*, *The Peeler and the*

Goat, *The Shan Van Vocht*, and *I know my love by his way of walking*.

The regional label is to be as much distrusted in American poetry as in English. One of the first propagandist acts of statehood is to take stock of state-poets and marshal them in an anthology. The only qualification for inclusion is a six-months' residence in the state: no doubt if poetry were financially more profitable there would be the same heavy transfer fees and bribes as are paid in American professional baseball (and English professional football). The usual anthology of Californian poets, for instance, begins with Edwin Markham who, though Oregon-born, did spend the first part of his life in California in the pioneering days, continues with George Sterling, who only came to California in 1895 at the age of twenty-six, and finishes with a batch of younger writers, many non-Californian, who attended Mr. Witter Bynner's class in verse-writing at the University of California – Mr. Bynner being a product of Harvard. Even Edwin Markham, however, never wrote verse that was in any sense Californian; except for a few casual references his early poems might have been written almost anywhere – even in Staten Island, his home for twenty-five years. His commonplace humanitarianism comes strangely from the most boisterously plutocratic, commercially freakish and cruelly reactionary state in the Union. George Sterling's Victorianism be-

longed neither to old-world San Francisco nor to new-world Hollywood. Younger 'California' poets might be just as fittingly classified as New York City nature poets, Chicago bums, Iowan or Virginian lyricists or Tennessee metaphysicians: on the assumption that it is not possible to get to one state without travelling through most of the others, and that all Americans are always travelling. And California, for poets as for prospective film stars, must be the shortest stop-over in the world. Californian poetry magazines are generally filled with the work of Easterners, Southerners and Middle Westerners who have failed with the Eastern, Southern or Middle Western magazines, or who wish to branch out, or by Westerners who can't get a hold in the Eastern, Southern, Middle Western magazines. But what is a Westerner?[1] Merely someone who happens to be living in the West. In California a pedigreed 'native' son or daughter is an esteemed curiosity; and in the other Western States native sons and daughters are taught to sing at State universities predominantly staffed or inspired by the cosmopolitan East.

As Californian poetry is only inferior American poetry, so modern negro poetry so labelled is only inferior white poetry. Mr. Countée Cullen, the

[1] Or what is a Southerner? One of the authors of this book spent a little over a year in Kentucky and has since been generally labelled a Southern poet.

youngest and most sentimentally advertised of contemporary negro poets, writes just a little worse than the usual versifying white undergraduate. The negro was perhaps the one American population-unit with a just claim to a spiritual regionalism. But he whitened himself in order to be able to express his blackness; and so was left with nothing to express. Or else he cynically blackened his blackness in order to bring a few material comforts into his spiritual region; and so became a white man's negro, a burnt-cork minstrel.

Separate regional portfolios, then, should be only allowed where the regional idiom is unmistakable, and used for fugitive pieces only. As soon as the regional flavour undergoes literary diffusion – as, for example, when the industrialization of the South destroyed its eccentric provincial culture – the regional category must be abandoned by the conscientious anthologist. Local sentiment nowadays (except in the case of local units too insignificant and too mute to be gathered in by time) is either a dingy hangover from the past or commercial opportunism or journalistic opportunism or the dissatisfaction of a group of literary theorists with vulgar literary diffusion. A stock-label, in fact, is only too often the mark of an inferior poet, or of an inferior critic. It may mean, as with the label 'peasant-poet' or 'poetess,' that there is no more to be said about the work than that it was written by a peasant, or by a woman. But it may also mean, on the other hand,

that the critic is either weakly or maliciously shirking his responsibilities; if John Clare, say, is dismissed as a peasant or Edith Sitwell as a woman; or if a woman critic dismissed *all* men poets as men.

Certain terms might seem justifiable as a necessary part of the anthologist's critical apparatus, where they contributed to the accuracy of his definition of a poet's work. Yet even the respectable term 'metaphysical' falls among the cant labels. Though it might be used, without prejudice, to suggest by simple analogy that the poet's method resembled the metaphysician's in its analytical thoroughness and in its almost business-like seriousness, as a matter of fact it generally expresses a critic's irritation with a poet too difficult for his poor powers, such as Johnson's irritation with Donne, or his self-congratulatory satisfaction with a poet difficult enough for his large powers, such as Eliot's satisfaction with Donne. In neither case is 'metaphysical' a disinterested critical term: a disinterested critical term is concentrated on the work rather than on the critic, whose job it is (if he wants the job) to describe, not to enjoy himself. So an anthology of metaphysical verse would be a flattering assemblage of light conceits, heavy philosophizings, airy speculations, dreary finalities – in which Mr. Eliot for one would set Donne and Poe side by side to be conversationally incomprehensible to each other. To make such an anthology possible it would

have to be disregarded (and an anthologist could disregard it quickly enough) that 'metaphysical' is critically meaningless except as a term of simple analogy – that poetry and metaphysics are professionally incompatible. The object of a professional metaphysician is to talk without saying anything. A poet's object is to talk and say something. An anthology of metaphysical verse would therefore consist of those poems or fragments of poems which, its editor would be proud to say, meant nothing to him.

'Mystical' would seem to be more easily sustainable as an anthology label, the analogy between poetic mystical experience and religious mystical experience being fairly close and a strong sympathy rather than a strong incompatibility existing between the two processes: here indeed is an accurate term all ready-made for the anthologist with critical pretensions. But as a critic he must maintain his prestige by begging criticism: if critics were really to practise criticism they would reveal it to be a matter of library routine rather than of belles-lettres. So with 'mystical' verse: the anthologist shirks the responsibility of applying his term accurately as at once too laborious and too humble. The preface to the *Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* reads:

'In sending out this anthology we have no desire to venture on a definition of what actually constitutes mysticism and what does not, since such an

attempt would be clearly outside our province. But . . . we have been governed in making our selection by a desire to include only such poems and extracts from poems as contain intimations of a consciousness wider and deeper than the normal.

'That is the connecting link between them – the thread, as it were, on which the individual pieces are strung. . . .

'Our attempt has been to steer between . . . uninspired piety on the one hand and mere intellectual speculation on the other.'

And we get a few truly mystical poets, such as Richard Rolle, Vaughan, Traherne and Phineas Fletcher, introducing Victorian dead-heads and living sap-heads who have played with mystic-making at the same time as they have played with poetry-making. As Alice Meynell wrote in a preface to another not much better 'mystical' anthology, *The Mount of Vision* (which, however, she did not compile):

'It is ominous to hear the name of mysticism so easily used, given and taken without a thought of its cost. Visions are thought easy to come by, and revelations and such extreme things as "the unitive life" – things for which the Saints thought fifty years of self-conquest and self-abandonment a paltry price – are discussed as incidents of well-read aspiration: with no mention of the first step, much chatter of the last.'

Now in a larger sense than merely Christian mysticism, with its implied asceticism and retreat, there is in a poetic sense the mysticism which the editors of the *Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* have defined as 'intimations of a consciousness wider and deeper than the normal'; yet though concessions are here made to other non-saintly and gross-feeding poets, such as Tennyson, Emerson, Browning, Swinburne and Matthew Arnold, there is not a line of Shakespeare's given – not even his *Phœnix and Turtle*, which is obscure enough and passionate enough for the editors to have passed off as even Christian mysticism. From the end of the seventeenth century onward, with the exception of Blake, Hopkins and Francis Thompson, who were religious persons and also poets, the collection consists almost wholly of the library-Victorians just listed as discovered writing sentimentally about religion, and dozens of dim little people, chiefly Anglo-Catholics, hiding their dimness and littleness behind the bright capital-letters of Mystery, Eternity, King of Kings, Perfect Soul, Immortal Truth, Body, Word, Dwelling, Watcher, Night, God. There are many styles; these are typical openings:

> 'The Lion, he prowleth far and near
> Nor swerves for pain or rue . . .
> And a little Lamb with aching Feet,
> He prowleth too . . .'
>
> *Ruth Lindsay.*

'Before me grew the human soul,
And, after I am dead and gone,
Through grades of effort and control
The marvellous work shall still go on . . .'
Archibald Lampmann.

'Snowflakes downfloating from the void
Upon my face,
Spilth of the silent alchemy employed
In deeps of space . . .'
Walter Wilmshurt.

'*The Voice of a Man*
What of the Night, O Watcher?
The Voice of a Woman
Yea, what of it? . . .'
Madison J. Cawein.

A list which bands together as (even occasional) mystics such writers as Clifford Bax, Robert Buchanan, G. K. Chesterton, Aubrey de Vere, Eva Gore-Booth, Sir Edmund Gosse, W. E. Henley, Jean Ingelow, Laurence Housman, George Macdonald, John Masefield, Sir Henry Newbolt, Alfred Noyes, John Oxenham, Alexander Pope, Sir James Rennell Rodd, Arthur Symons, Evelyn Underhill and Oscar Wilde, can only move us to wonder why anybody has been left out at all by the ambitious anthologist.

'Mystical,' then, as stock-label, besides putting

the critic who uses it under suspicion, may merely indicate a mental muddiness in the poet, the celebration of vagueness by minds incapable of clarity. However, though there are inferior mystics posing as poets and inferior poets posing as mystics, the mystic function need not be called in question. Mystical experience is an arrival at a proved state of sublimity; and men have been sublime. There is a close resemblance, moreover, between mystical contemplation and poetic concentration: the difference is principally in the object, which in the first is predictable, in the second unpredictable. A critic might profitably occupy himself in showing where these experiences coincided and where they diverged and thus give himself a critical excuse for anthologizing. But he would hesitate to admit the need for an excuse; believing it safer for his prestige to go on occupying himself unprofitably – and so it is.

All poetical categories reduce to the subject category. For poetry is most easily digested as a parallelism in Song of all the headings of the encyclopædia of rational prose life – a compressed pocket-universe. A poem is something quite new. The critic, a self-appointed busy-body and guardian of ancient peace, suppresses the heresy by showing it to be something quite old; the anthology makes poetry conform as far as possible to the conventions of stereotyped appearance. Hence the anthology-label, under whose reassuring stamp poetry reads like a twice-told tale.

Chapter VIII

ANTHOLOGIES AND THE LIVING POET

THE anthology meets with two different kinds of reactions in living poets. They will write either toward the anthology or away from it. Anti-anthology poets often overreach themselves, inflicting self-protective distortions on their work – as parents in old Central Europe often deliberately maimed their sons to save them from compulsory military service. But the problem of remaining outside the anthology system should be to the poet no other than the problem of writing as it is best for him to write. Once it becomes a separate problem, his work is distracted with snobbish considerations. The charmlessness of some of the best poetry of our time is in part due to a militant disdain of anthology standards and criticism.

But in the long run it is almost impossible to hold out against the anthology. One of the 'romances of modern publishing' is the success of Messrs. Benn's set of sixpenny modern English poets, *The Augustan Books of Modern Poetry*, also published in America by Messrs. Stokes – with a corresponding set of

American poets by Messrs. Simon & Schuster. The less popular poets of these series are naturally glad of a chance of freeing themselves from the anthology and of finding a few new intelligent readers among the greater public which they could otherwise never reach. A number of these small volumes, which average two thousand lines apiece, can be bound together to make a very good *introductory* anthology to the works of the various poets concerned; for in each case the poet has approved of the selection and arrangement. But only introductory; seldom representative of the whole body of a poet's work. The general editors have a very clear idea of what the sixpence-in-purse public will stand, and are particularly bound to respect the limitations of the school-teacher. Hence the poet is only permitted to include his 'sweetest' and, because of the word-limit, his shortest poems, so as to give an appearance of variety. In fact, the majority of these poems approximate closely to the demands of the anthology reader, though they were not originally written toward the anthology.

A poet like Edith Sitwell, however, should come off better than most in this series because she has written very few anthology pieces. Also, because she is included in the series as a notoriously modernist poet (about whom the public, which pretends to but does not buy her individual volumes, is glad, for sixpence, to satisfy its curiosity), she can put in more or

less what she likes, except naughty poems in which Bishops, Beelzebub and Queen Victoria occur. She is even at liberty to omit the only poem, an uncharacteristic one, by which she is known in the anthologies, *The King of China's Daughter*, a fancy restatement of a simple nursery rhyme, done in the days before she had found herself as a poet. Yet from polite condescension she feels constrained to print *Colonel Fantock* and *The little Ghost who died for Love*, instances of charming and completely traditional writing. And now the pleasure of being popularly received in spite of herself has led her, in *Rustic Elegies*, to write, one would say, definitely toward the anthology.

Similarly James Joyce, in *Pomes Penyeach*, published after *Ulysses*, capitulates to the success of the early *Chamber Music*, which was represented in Mr. Colum's *Anthology of Irish Verse* by stanzas like the following:

> 'This heart that flutters near my heart
> My hope and all my riches is,
> Unhappy when we draw apart
> And happy between kiss and kiss;
> My hope and all my riches – yes! –
> And all my happiness.'

The unanthological Joyce is to be found hidden away in his unanthological prose work. The *Ballad of Joking Jesus*, for example, in *Ulysses*:

'I'm the queerest young fellow
That ever you heard,
My mother's a jew,
My father's a bird. . . .'

One of the most recently dated of the 'pomes' is:

Bahnhofstrasse.

'The eyes that mock me sign the way
Whereto I pass at eve of day,
Grey way whose violet signals are
The trysting and the twining star.
Ah star of evil! star of pain!
High-hearted youth comes not again
Nor old heart's wisdom yet to know
The signs that mock me as I go.'

The high-brow success of the *Waste Land* brought T. S. Eliot into the anthologies with the *Conversation Galante* and other ingratiating early pieces:

'I observe: "Our sentimental friend, the moon!
Or possibly (fantastic, I confess)
It may be Prester John's balloon
Or an old battered lantern hung aloft
To light poor travellers in their distress."
She then: "How you digress!" '

And now, captured by general fame, he is busy wiping out his waste years with poems like the *Journey of the Magi*, pursuing his anthology career in earnest.

Anthology pressure is indeed difficult to resist. Poets who have happened to have a popular success with a poem are tempted to repeat themselves with another on the same model; and the second is often equally popular in anthologies. So Burns' *Wee modest crimson-tippèd flower* and his *Wee sleekit cow'ring tim'rous beastie*, candidates for the contemporary *Beauties of the Poets*; and so De la Mare's *Far are those tranquil hills* and his *Far are the shades of Arabia*. So at first sight Shakespeare's early song, *When daisies pied and violets blue* and his later *When daffodils begin to peer*. Shakespeare not only repeated a popular success of his own, but he was not above repeating a popular success of someone else's. He did it, for example, with Lyly's poem *What bird so sings yet so does wail?* popularized by the play *Alexander and Campaspe*, which is full of 'reminiscences' of Shakespeare's later borrowings from it. But Shakespeare's songs were intended for his not very serious comedies. Futhermore, they were never offered by him as anthological poems. *When daisies pied* and the other 'when' poems are definitely satiric of the properly anthological poems of Breton, Barnfield and others. No such excuse can be found for Tennyson's *When cats run home and light is come*, a plagiarization of Shakespeare's *When icicles hang by the wall* with an ambitious anthological cast.

So John Clare, when taken up by literary London

and put into the peasant-poet category of which Burns was then the leading example, was cajoled into writing:

'The bloom's on the brere, bonny lassie oh!
Oak apple's on the tree, and wilt thou gang to see
The shed I've made for thee,
Bonnie lassie oh?'

'. . . with the woodbine peeping in . . .'

and even into trying his hand at drawing-room stuff in the manner of Moore and Byron:

'Maid of Jerusalem, by the Dead Sea,
I wandered all sorrowing, thinking of thee:
Thy city in ruins, thy kindred deplored,
All fallen and lost by the Ottoman sword' –

when he could write and had already written better poetry than Burns, Byron and Moore at their best. But poor Clare, in financial straits, had his eye on the heavy fees then paid by the yearly Keep-Sake anthology.

The present-day Living-Poet anthology sorts itself into four general types. The first is the schoolroom anthology supplementing the usual Dead-Poet anthology, including only the works of poets who write best poems in the tradition of thirty years ago. This entombment of the Living-Dead has its merits: these poets, jealous of each other with a rancour not

to be found among their juniors, are glad to be safely in port 'among the *English Poets*' – as poor Keats hoped some day to be. And their removal from life to literature clears the decks somewhat for a new generation which may do no better, but could hardly do much worse. *Poetry of To-day*, published in England by the English Association principally for use in English Schools, is more up to date than the usual anthology of this sort. Its object is to brighten the Poetry Lesson in the Freubelized school where they hang up orange curtains in every room and do Eurhythmics at the proper interval after a carefully caloried breakfast. This sort of anthology exhibits all the worst traits of the ordinary popular anthology. It does not present the poetry of a real 'to-day' but of a rejuvenated yesterday. Its message is: 'Now this morning, dear children (and any of you older people who like to listen to my little chat), I have a wonderful secret for you. *The poets are not all dead* as you have been accustomed to think. Shakespeare is dead, alas, and so are Byron, Tennyson and the heroic Robert Brooke of whom I spoke yesterday in my talk about the Meaning of Patriotism. But great poets are still alive to-day, walking among us with their marvellous heads full of the same marvellous magic for us. There's a hill near Oxford where no fewer than three of them live quite close to each other: Dr. Bridges, the Poet Laureate (like Tennyson was); and Mr. Gilbert Murray, whose

wonderful translation of *Alcestis* we are going to act as a play next term; and Mr. John Masefield, perhaps the greatest poet of our day, who writes so beautifully of the Sea and Hunting and Racing and other exciting subjects – sometimes so sadly, but always so beautifully. And then there is Mr. Laurence Binyon, the great master of the modern Ode, and the musical Mr. De la Mare, and Mr. W. H. Davies who was once a tramp – which shows that the Spirit of Poetry blows unaccountably about like the wind and may light on any man: who knows, it may one day, please God, fall on one of you here . . .' etc. The corresponding American poetry lesson exists, with post-Stedman American Anthologies and Poetic Worlds ranging in gentle gradation from Edwin Markham's *Man with the Hoe* to Vachel Lindsay's *Chinese Nightingale* – modern, in the American secondary-school sense, means nearly dead American. There was this to be said for the old-fashioned straight-classical education, that what corresponded in the curriculum to the modern Poetry Lesson, the making of Latin Verses on the model of Ovid and Virgil, was never felt by the child to have any connection with poetry and was rather an amusing game, like the cross-word puzzle. Lucretius was too early to be a model and Catullus too un-Latin (having broken many of Virgil's and Ovid's rules): so poetry was spared from the school-boy as he from it; and if in the play-hour he read or even

wrote English poetry, the shadow of the blackboard did not darken the page.

A second type of the Living-Poet anthology is the subscription anthology and is closely connected with the Poetry-Magazine movement. It is a simple money-making matter, cleverly exploiting the inexperience and ambition of young and old fools of both sexes who have read too many anthologies and are thrilled at any prospect of seeing their own work in print. The usual method is to collect a clientèle through a poetry magazine with a publishing house attached; to solicit manuscripts, which is always encouraging; to propose the publication of a slim single-man booklet for which must be guaranteed a sum equivalent to five times the actual cost of printing the book – the publisher, from his high opinion of the work, promising to take half the risk in an edition of five hundred copies. The little poet is delighted at the idea and raises the money. After a long delay about a hundred copies are really printed, at trifling cost; they are not advertised. The author's friends buy up about fifty or sixty, but no others are sold. The publisher shakes his head in pretended disappointment at the sales, the author feels sorry to have cheated him out of his half-share in the risk, admires his unselfish declaration: 'But it was an honour to have published the book!' and is then ready to 'advertise' the book in the subscription-anthology in which, with his hundred fellow-gulls,

he is enrolled at the cost, say, of two guineas or ten dollars a poem. Here the expense of publishing is somewhat greater, but the gulls and their friends buy up enough copies to make the venture a very profitable one to the publisher, who uses the anthology as a net for further fish.

Sometimes the subscription-anthology is published by the committee of a literary society on behalf of its members. *The Bookfellow Anthology*, Chicago, 1926, may be an example of this, though it is not clear whether the not-inconsiderable profits of the previous issue went to the copyright holder, Flora Warren Seymour, or to George Steele Seymour who wrote the introduction, or to the general funds of the Bookfellow Association, of which the Seymours are officials, possibly paid officials, or to the funds of the Bookfellow poetry-magazine, *The Step-Ladder*, of the editorial staff of which (it is possible to deduce from the anthology) they are members. At all events:

'The terms for entry into this volume were the same as for the 1925 Anthology. Contributors were required to be Bookfellows [that is, to pay a membership fee, which included a subscription to the *Step-Ladder*] and to purchase three copies of the book for each page contributed, the price of the book being fixed at two dollars per copy. Not more than ten pages might be contributed by any one person.'

It appears that the 'co-operating publishers' of 1925 sent their spare-copies free to the libraries and newspaper offices. 'As our plan had not contemplated the giving away of free copies at the expense of increased cost of production, this generous act of our associates at once surprised and pleased us.' And this edition, and another too, was sold out.

'A few of the contributing authors were themselves newspaper-writers, and they lent their efforts with a will to the task of putting it over. . . . We shall say little of the imitations that at once sprang up, for they were palpably imitations in every respect save one – that the power of co-operative publishing which we Bookfellows command was not behind them. And as they languish unsold and uncirculated – the inevitable fate of the book that is not wanted – we come forward again with our 1926 Anthology' –

whose pages of verse number 235. Multiply that by six and the answer in dollars is the *certain* takings of the volume, that is, 1,410 dollars. Further takings from actual sales should bring in at least another two or three hundred dollars. As the cost of producing the book itself (it was printed at a private press), with no distribution expenses beyond the postage of the copies to the authors (perhaps even these were carriage forward), could not have exceeded, at the most, five hundred dollars for the edition of eight

hundred copies, someone seems to have made a nice little sum out of the 'co-operative venture.' As it is not so recorded, we may not take it for granted that the contributors or 'associated publishers' were each sent back two-thirds of their subscription. But such contributors are not captious about returns: this is a consolation-anthology. They believe that a printed book has more lastingness than the files of a poetry-magazine and that when the printed book gets round to newspaper-critics this may be the beginning of a poetic career for each of them – a still higher rung of the step-ladder. Such a dream may be worth while even at six dollars a page, and even if, as in the case of Jessie E. Williams, who contributed six pages, the average printed on each page is only ten lines. But it should be commercially possible to dream it more cheaply.

A third type of Living-Poet anthology deals in the marketable sentiment aroused by some event of public importance – the murder of President McKinley, the death of Edward the Peace-Maker, the Sinking of the *Titanic*, the Outbreak of War, the Victory. That President McKinley, the puppet-nominee of the Trusts at their most cynically corrupt stage, was murdered by a maniac; that Edward the Peace-Maker, personally responsible for the English Entente with France and therefore for the destruction of the Anglo-German alliance which was keeping the peace of Europe, died after a life not

particularly distinguished for the qualities which his idealistic German mother and father had tried to inculcate in him; that the *Titanic* was sunk as a result of culpable negligence on the part of the staff and that its sinking was attended by scenes that, to say the least of it, compared unfavourably with those at the sinking of the *Birkenhead*; that the English Liberal Government was able to justify by the German invasion of Belgium its own secret commitments to and preparations for a war that had as its object the crippling of a commercial rival; and finally that this War was technically won by weight of numbers and munitions after a gross display of atrocities on both sides – all this is history. But the anthologist and his poet have no more respect for history than for poetry, for public than for personal truth.

Mr. Braithwaite's *Victory! Celebrated by Thirty-eight American Poets* begins with a series of panegyrics on the heroes of the time, of the quality of which this sestet of a sonnet to Marshal Foch is a fair example:

'Focus of freedom – Foch! Your mind has made
Reason – religion's theme, intelligence –
An anthem rising from the blood-dark sod.
Your brow – a temple where the world has prayed,
Your brain – of myriad souls the single lens:
A burning glass, held in the hand of God.'

Since King Albert, Sir Douglas Haig, General Diaz,

General Pershing and Cardinal Mercier have each to be celebrated as the unique heroes of Victory there is some discrepancy – but never mind, they were all jolly good fellows, even – guess whom! – General Leonard Wood!

'Had not your spirit led, our ardent youth
Had faltered leaderless, their eager feet
Attuned to effort for the valiant truth,
Through your command alone, rushed to complete
To hold on high the torch of Liberty
Great visioned soul, yours is the victory.'

This marketable sentiment is chiefly Franco-American (the literary references to Lafayette and Joan of Arc are not tactful, but may be set off against the English victory hymns recollecting Waterloo and the Flanders campaigns of Marlborough). The victory mood in America yielded precedence in valour and sacrifice only to the French, exalted Château Thierry into a major military operation and concealed the fact that the total casualties of the British Forces were between eighty and ninety times greater than the American. Sometimes not even to France, as when Edgar Lee Masters writes of

'the glory of England, glory of Italy, glory of France
And the imperishable glory of America.'

The introduction, again, begins tactlessly:

'Lowell's great lines ring as true to-day as at the close of the Civil War:

"Come, Peace! not like a mourner bowed,
For honour lost and dear ones wasted,
But proud, to meet a people proud
With eyes that tell of triumph tasted." '

This is rather hard on the Southern regiments who also marched to glory at Château Thierry.

The moral of the collection is also confused: undying hate against Germany on the one hand, eternal peace on the other; 'Sew the flags together' (Vachel Lindsay) and American nationalism triumphant; and liberal rhetoric like Mr. Untermeyer's

'Soon these battered heroes will come back
The same, yet not the same.

'They who have bandied words in No Man's Land
Will never be the old and abject crowd.
They will not grovel and they will not stand
What used to keep them cowed.'

Mr. Untermeyer's battered heroes unfortunately fulfilled his promise only too literally: E. E. Cummings, for instance, in his charming portrait (not included in *Victory*):

'A tear within his stern blue eye
upon his firm white lips a smile,
one thought alone: to do and die
for God for country and for Yale

'above his blond determined head
the sacred flag of truth unfurled,
in the bright heyday of his youth
the upper class American

'unsullied stands, before the world:
with manly heart and conscience free,
upon the front steps of her home
by the high minded pure young girl

'much kissed, by loving relatives
well fed, and fully photographed
the son of man goes forth to war
with trumpets clap and syphilis.'

A fourth type is the yearly Best Poem anthology which is generally conducted for the publisher by a minor anthology poet, such as L. A. G. Strong, author of *Dublin Days*, *The Lowery Road*, *Difficult Love*, and Thomas Moult, author of *Down Here the Hawthorn*. It purports to give an annual summary of the 'best' poetry that can be winnowed from magazine verse. It never assigns more than two poems to any individual author, and by giving the public which 'wishes to be informed of contemporary verse-tendencies' ready-made taste in names kills any critical interest in poetry itself. All these volumes are of a uniform size: which gives away the game at once. If there was any real critical interest in their compilation the 1925 volume would have been perhaps a thin pamphlet, the 1926 volume a still thinner

one, while in 1927 an official announcement might have been issued to subscribers: 'We regret that this year the vintage has failed and no anthology will be printed.'

The financial history of these 'Best Poems of . . .' anthologies – which as a matter of fact are only commercially successful in the sense that they pay the publisher better than volumes by individual authors – is interesting: though no contributors are invited to pay their fee for inclusion, to become 'co-publishers' at six dollars a page, not many are given any fee other than their presentation-copy. There are, however, a few 'names' which must be secured in order to give the collection an air of respectability. Each 'name' is paid for according to the owner's awareness of its exact market-value. An unwholesome situation is thus at once created: the anthologist, on behalf of his publishers, either offers to print a poem free as a favour, or, as a greater favour still, offers a small fee for it. In cases where a fee is demanded and the name is uncertain, the anthologist punishes the shylock by omitting him. For the most part he takes advantage of the 'uncommercial spirit' of grateful verse-writers.

Many of the features of the more general popular anthology are to be found in this type. The same salad-mixing of subject, for example, the same Composite Picture of the (Modern) Poetic World. Indeed, if we are to have more of these anthologies

of *Living and Willing Poets*, and if the reading public continues to support them, we may as well have 'Bespoke Yearlies,' in which the poems are written (by poets who have 'made good') to the order of the anthologist.

Once this system was inaugurated an English committee might get in touch with an American committee, and a combined Poetical Budget might be made out on the first of April every year. To Mr. Conrad Aiken would be allotted the Garden poem; to Miss Edna St. Vincent Millay, the Old Woman poem; to Mr. T. S. Eliot, the Old Man Poem; to Mr. Wolfe, the Lamb poem; to Mr. Chesterton, the Love Song; and so on, each with one or if necessary two competent under-studies. This would mean a high standard of writing and no overlapping or jealousy. The Official Anthology would appear punctually on November 5th each year and would be on sale at all railway bookstalls, leading stationers, Army canteens, Woolworth Stores, etc.; and it would be possible to pay each poet as much for his quota as he makes in a year from private volumes and from book-reviews. It would be pointed out in the first issue that poetry is now an important public service and that private enterprise is to be considered anti-social and uneconomic; and that the aim of this Official Anthology is to protect the public from freebooting poets and freebooting poets from themselves.

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

THE growth of the modern popular anthology in England can be traced through the stage of medium-sized 'Beauties of the Poets,' which were guides to Chalmers' twenty-one volume *English Poets* published in 1810 (or to the less complete Libraries of Poets that went before), to a final condensation in the miniature *Golden Treasury*, 1861, which also contained the cream of the poetry of the new century. This abridgment of the *English Poets* was so well received that Chalmers went out of print and has had no successor: the publishing unit for poetry in the bulk is now the abridgment itself.

America, which never had a Chalmers, was content throughout the nineteenth century with a series of compendiums of mixed verse, very much larger in size than the English anthologies. These were really popular in feeling; they were compiled for the American average reader at a time when the gap between his taste and that of the advanced reader was not great, when it was therefore not necessary to anthologize either up or down to suit a particular public. One of the earliest of these volumes, first

published in 1842 at Philadelphia, consists entirely of American writers – *The Poets and Poetry of America*, edited by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. It was described as a survey of the beginnings of a true American literature in the first half-century of freedom: 'until the spirit of freedom began to influence the national character very little verse worthy of preservation was produced in America. The poetry of the Colonies was without originality, energy, feeling or correctness of diction.' Griswold's method is to give the work of over a hundred poets – practically all there were – allotting generous page-space and a biographical note to each; and since the contributors are not strongly differentiated in style and subject he covers the field well enough. Griswold in 1849 later divided up the book into two parts, separately published, *the Poets* and *the Female Poets* of America. The male poets given most space were Charles Hoffman, Bryant, Percival, Whittier, Holmes, Brainard, Pierpont, Pinkney, Emerson, Longfellow, Sprague, Poe; in that order. Hoffman has thirty-six poems, Poe fourteen: which is very fair when you read them both without prejudice. The female poets of this half-century are forgotten names: Sarah Josepha Hale, Emma Willard, Lavinia Stoddard, Lydia Sigourney, Maria Brooks, Sarah Helen Whitman and Frances Osgood (the two last-named of Poe-ish fame), Elizabeth Kinney, Mary Stebbins, etc.

Griswold's collection unfortunately prepared the

way for others less harmless: trying to cover too much ground, they had to arrange their material according to subject-categories in order to handle it, and to mutilate poems to save space. Charles Dana's *Household Book of Poetry*, first published in 1856, was a quarto of over eight hundred double-columned pages of the combined gems of American and English verse. Dana arranged the poems for household uses, like kitchen stores: Poems of Nature, Poems of Childhood, Poems of Friendship, Poems of Love, Poems of Ambition, Poems of Comedy, Poems of Tragedy and Sorrow, Poems of the Imagination, Poems of Sentiment and Reflection. A solid book, successful enough to produce many solid imitations, including Whittier's *Songs of Three Centuries*, Emerson's *Parnassus*, and Fields' and Whipple's *Family Library of British Poets*. The household as a reading-unit was a discovery of American Victorianism and did not survive it (it was also discovered in Victorian England, but Archbishop Trench's *Household Book of Poetry*, published in the 'fifties, had few, if any, English imitators). The biggest and most ambitious of all these family compendiums was Bryant's *Family Library of Poetry and Song, Being Choice Selections from the Best Poets, English, Irish, Scottish and American, including Translations from the German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Persian, Latin, Greek, etc.*, a quarto of over a thousand pages. He keeps Dana's

arrangement but adds new categories: Poems of Temperance and Labour, Poems of Patriotism and Freedom, Poems of the Sea, and so on. Nearly all these compendiums are grangerized with poetical engravings, depicting Scottish Maidens, Drowned Maidens, Storms, Bouquets, the Stricken Stag, the Convent Cloister and the birthplaces and libraries of well-known American poets. But it is difficult to feel severe about these books: though they show not the slightest suspicion of what poetry is all about, they have other simple virtues of which honesty and undifferentiating kindliness are the chief; and they were genuinely read and enjoyed; and they are no longer published; and, if they survive at all in remote parlours, give comfort where comfort is needed.

Griswold's *Poets and Poetry of America* was superseded by Edmund Clarence Stedman's *An American Anthology*, 1787–1900, a more ambitious version of his earlier *Poets of America*, as his *Victorian Anthology* was of his *Victorian Poets*. But as Stedman's page-length was less than Griswold's in spite of the addition of sixty years of poetry the result is unsatisfactory. Griswold printed just as much as was historically pertinent; his was, in fact, a true period-anthology. Stedman fell into the anthology trap because he wanted to be critical, as he rightly believed Griswold had not been. 'But if this anthology were modelled upon his "Poets and Poetry of

America" it would occupy a shelf of volumes'; which it should have done.

In the new century, in place of the large family compendium, America adopted the shorter sample-anthology of the English variety, which professes to be merely a guide to, not a substitute for, the works of the poets represented. But the difficulty in both countries is that of ready access to the poets, the absence, in fact, of an up-to-date Chalmers. There have been several partial Libraries of the Poets published, with a single volume for each poet: the *Globe* series, the *Muses' Library*, the *Everyman* series and the *Mermaid* series. But no publishing house has undertaken to print a definite corpus on the Chalmers' model. Yet copyright troubles are not so serious as they were a hundred years ago because, except for a few odd pieces lately discovered or texts 'established' of ancient poets, one may reprint almost anything. And much more compendious works have been frequently attempted, brought to conclusion and kept up to date. *The Encyclopædia Britannica* and *New English Dictionary* are immediate instances – not to mention the many historical and scientific encyclopædias or series; and the *Loeb Classical Library*, a collection which in spite of its great value is of far less importance to the English-speaking world than a library of English Poetry, makes steady progress.

Our first suggestion for the defeat of the popular

anthology is that the publishers should meet in the friendly way that their predecessors the booksellers met in Dr. Johnson's day, sinking their separate financial interests for the occasion, and agree to share the labour, expense and profits of a new standard *English Poets* to be published co-ordinately in England and America. Any publisher who has commercial interests in any particular poet should, of course, have these assessed by an impartial committee. Since the collection when complete would consist of perhaps thirty large quartos, each containing a number of poets, the harm done to handy individual volumes in series like the *Globe* and *Everyman* would be inconsiderable. The poets chosen would be mostly out-of-copyright poets; the latest at any rate need be no later than the day before yesterday. There would, we believe, be an immediate and satisfactory demand from all libraries, colleges, clubs of any size and from a number of private persons. Given this representative Corpus of dead poets, including those omitted by Chalmers, the whole situation begins to clear. We become independent of the tyranny of anthologies; if we want to read and judge how much of a poet Mathew Green or Thomas Flatman or Robert Henrysoun was, we are no longer forced into probably fruitless search in the Municipal Library, or into eating the few dry crumbs that we find or do not find in the *Golden Treasury* or the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. As things are,

if we wish to buy the volume there is no means of finding the publishers of the most authoritative edition; if we apply to a large bookshop we cannot be certain whether its critical judgment is to be trusted. If we write to the *Reader's Guide* of a literary review we shall, after about six months, get an evasive answer. Or even if in some cases such editions not only exist but are easily obtainable, the expense will be great – very great if our interest in the lesser known poets is broad. Suppose Skelton is wanted, Dyce's edition, a very good one indeed published in 1843, may cost as much as five pounds; Richard Hughes' edition of 1924, though it contains a poem not known to Dyce, is only a selection. Other poets are also published at prices which mount up prohibitively – Hopkins, Blake, Traherne, Smart, the Scottish Chaucerians. In the Corpus we would have each poet, complete and in his place, from Cynewulf onward: and for people with small libraries this would be a great economy in money, time and shelf-space.

One of the greatest benefits of the Corpus would be the disappearance of the 'corners' of knowledge by which the critic contrives to dupe and impress the general reader. An obscure and almost worthless poet is cried up as a neglected genius on the strength of a few better lines: the reader cannot check the judgment, and perhaps allows himself to be convinced, adding another name to his list of snobbish

literary mentions. Not only these, but better-known poets, such as Dryden or Ben Jonson, never read but taken for granted on the critic's word, would have to be at least looked at because they were there. The usual anthology blur would be avoided, because all the work of each poet would appear. The oppressiveness of the great names, moreover, which generally upsets the balance of the anthology, would be counteracted by the size of the Corpus itself.

Educationalists should encourage such a collection. Much of the artificiality of English literature courses at the Universities is due to the inadequacy of the local library, in which the English poetry representation consists of random and non-uniform volumes, with many gaps. Students are thus obliged to get their critical views from second-hand sources like W. J. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* and *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. And frequently the professors themselves have had no other sources but these. With the Corpus, students would be able to discard such text-book lies as 'The Age of Shakespeare,' 'The Age of Dryden,' 'The Age of Wordsworth.' Poetry would show itself to be not a sequence of fashions, but of individual poets who are poets only to the extent to which they are outside the sequence of fashions.

This full Corpus would include all poets who had a certain recognizable minimum of credibility: there is poetry which is not even historically significant

and about which every one, whatever his literary politics, agrees. Thus Spratt, Lyttelton, Cawthorn, John Cunningham, Boyse and a dozen more eighteenth-century writers included by Chalmers would be probably unanimously omitted from the Corpus by a representative committee, as others omitted by Chalmers would be included. If there were any disagreement at all as to whether or not a poet should be included, he would naturally be included. Where it was agreed to include a poet, disagreement as to his relative merit would not matter, as each poet would be printed entire and in a uniform manner. If a poet in his old age has, like Wordsworth, rewritten the poems of his youth, both versions should be given. The texts should be correlated with great accuracy and the Universities called upon to help in this matter. Candidates for a degree in English Literature, who are always at a loss for a suitable thesis-task, might well be set to work on this.

Given such a collection, with its particular volumes devoted to the anonymous waifs and strays of a given period (the true anthologies), the popular anthology loses much of its power to vulgarize poetry. Even Palgrave and his rivals could be restrained from doing serious damage if the Corpus included a skeleton appendix of these anthologies, reducing them to mere Recommendations for Reading in the Corpus: a list of page and volume references with such notes as 'stanzas 4 and 5

omitted' and 'text reformed as follows for use in schools.' If private manuscript-anthologies were kept again they would remain private; at the most, they might be condensed into page-references and included at the end of the Corpus as 'Miss So-and-so's' or 'Mr. So-and-so's' Reading Recommendation.

Every ten years it would be found necessary to print a supplement bringing the Corpus up to date, as with the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and at longer intervals complete new printings. This would mean not only the improvement of texts – the Corpus could provide a much-needed international clearing-house for variorum readings, newly discovered poems, re-attributions of poems, re-datings and so forth – but the inclusion of further poets, both older ones revived and more recent ones who had just passed through the thirty years' purgatory qualifying them for admission. University bodies might further be employed in providing a grand Poetical Concordance, on the lines of the Biblical Concordance. All the *Larks* and *Solitudes* and *Kisses* and so on could be thus assembled far more effectively than by a single editor at present. Even with a poetical concordance there would be plenty of minor tricks left for the amusement of private scholars. But besides a concordance, there is the enormous task of making a cross-reference index of unconscious or deliberate plagiarisms and adaptations. Let the editors

print Lady John Scott's version of *Annie Laurie*, but refer back to Douglas of Fingland's original; let them print Chaucer in the original, and then show by Dryden's adaptations what the late seventeenth-century preferred. Let them print Shirley's 'Glories of our Blood and State,' and refer back to Shakespeare's 'Fidele's Dirge.' Let them mark Herrick with the back-references to Skelton's *Philip Sparrow*; mark Burns with back-references to the popular ballads; mark Clare with back-references to Burns and Moore, and refer his *Skylark* back to Shelley's. Let them print Shakespeare's songs in the dramas as they occur, and then refer to the borrowings. Let them, in a full bibliographical index, show in the case of poets whose works were not collected in volume-form in their own day at what point they became part of literary history; or, in the case of poets like Donne and Campion, at what point they were restored to literary history after a lapse of popularity.

The collection need not be as trying as Chalmers, although printed at four times his length: Chalmers did not have India paper at his disposal and so was obliged to use very small print. Nor would it be beyond the interest of the general reader. For the general reader of poetry is a *general* reader. The skimmer in poetry is not a reader, as with the popular novel: the reader either reads poetry and reads it generally, or he is no reader at all. The

popular anthology, indeed, is composed not for readers, but, like the popular novel, for skimmers: the purchaser's interest is not in *reading*, merely in *seeing* who is in it, what the titles are like, what look the poems have. Yet the general reader need not be an expert reader. For the inexpert reader the skeleton anthologies printed in the appendix at the end of the Corpus could act as guides. And when he turned, say, to *Woak Hill* by Barnes or *I am but what I am who cares or knows* by Clare, he would find these usual anthology poems in their right setting, in their right version, in their right spelling, and entire.

The new Corpus, then, would present past poetry in the bulk, poetry, that is, removed by at least a generation from the politics of contemporary literature; it would introduce order into quantity by giving the quantity complete. But it is a question whether it could be profitably extended to contemporary poetry: it might introduce into it an order which was qualitative rather than quantitative, a liberal order of taste. If not, how might contemporary authors come up for eventual election to the Corpus? Rather by waiting two hundred years in manuscript like Traherne than registering themselves in popular anthologies of the present Living-Poet variety; anthologies which are mostly compiled from magazine-material, so that the work included is the least characteristic work of the better poets and the most characteristic of the worse – the most anthologizable

of both. The anthologist has used the magazines merely as the cheapest and laziest means of getting his material together; he rarely consults the individual volumes of the poets themselves – if he does, he still keeps magazine standards. Moreover, because of these standards, it is very difficult indeed for an uncommercializable poet to get his work published in any form. Undistinguished but old-fashioned and undistinguished but new-fashioned poetry can get printed easily enough as dressing to a publisher's list. There are publishers who specialize in new-fashioned poetry as there are others who specialize in old. But poetry of an unorthodox and yet not aggressively sensational type often remains unpublished for years, because it is without obvious commercial value.

Suppose, for the moment, that poetry of even an unpopular character were freely printed: why could not the Corpus do for contemporary poetry what it could do for past poetry: print every so many years a supplement of contemporary poetry? Such a supplement might contain, with the authors' permission, all the poetry printed in volume-form in the period covered, omitting work in each case which the author wished to discredit. If obviously inconsequential volumes were excluded according to the same principle that was suggested for the Corpus itself (but none because they seemed difficult to label or otherwise difficult, the object of such a

supplement being not critical but to include as much as could be decently included), the size and expense would not be prohibitive. Especially when one considers the expenditure made on various bulky directories published yearly and even twice yearly – telephone directories, street directories, Who's Who's, Peerages, Landed Gentries, Fraternity Year Books, College Year Books, Blue Books, Business Directories, Garden, Clothing and Furniture Catalogues, Literary Year Books, Publishers' Catalogues, Guidebooks to Hotels and Pensions of France, Patent Medicine Almanacs, etc. The expense of such a supplement could be considerably reduced, moreover, by making it a subscription edition. Incidental financial problems would remain – the value of contemporary poems varies with critical wire-pulling and first-edition speculation and unaccountable fashion and would be difficult to assess. But even if the financial question could be adjusted, a committee would not be likely to agree as to what contemporary poetry was inconsequential as a similar one could about past poetry. Indeed, it would be impossible at the start to form a committee representative of all legitimate tastes in contemporary poetry: the same economic forces that govern the publishing of poetry at the present time would also govern the definition of legitimacy.

Why could not poets themselves combine to form libraries? Principally because most poets belong to

cliques and would be prevented by personal feeling or critical bias from combining in a large way. And the few independents would be indifferent. Small co-operative anthologies are usually just advertising organs for a new brand of poetry, like the *Imagist* series; or tea-parties of co-opted popular-anthology successes raised above clique-jealousy, like the *American Miscellany*. The recent *Fugitive* anthology is perhaps as inoffensive as a small co-operative anthology may be; it is in the nature of a memorial volume to the friendliness of a few poets once temporarily associated – by geography rather than by programme. It is difficult to decide whether the co-operative clique-anthology is better or worse than the publicity anthology conducted on behalf of poets by the poetry enthusiast or the professional anthologist, who create cliques. It is exceptional to find an editor of the integrity of E.M., the founder of *Georgian Poetry*, which began as an attempt to call attention to certain poets who had not come so far under public notice and continued biennially for ten years. E.M. kept in the background with a most unusual restraint, wrote no purple prefaces, paid his contributors generously, exercised no patronage and, when he found that the task that he had set himself in the 1911–1912 volume had been accomplished and that the newer generation of writers had aims unintelligible or unacceptable to him, decided to discontinue the series though it was still in popular

demand. He never associated himself with any poetry-magazines or societies and published no verse of his own until the series was over. However, even *Georgian Poetry*, like the *Imagist Anthology* did little in the long run but institute a fashion in verse-writing and make it difficult for the poets included to shake off the fashion or the label.

The rejection of a supplement to a Corpus of poetry, the rejection in fact of the Living-Poet anthology in any disguise, seems to bring the fate of contemporary poetry with contemporaries to a dead halt. Yet nothing could be more desirable. For the worst fate that contemporary poetry can have is to have any fate, however unarbitrary, with its contemporaries. If the popular anthology were removed, if contemporary poetry in general were removed as a subject of journalistic reference, and the magazines devoted to such reference removed as well, there might be nothing left but a few plainly printed volumes, to be found out by those who were meant to find them out, exercising no persuasion but that of being between their two covers, from line to line and page to page, for whoever should happen to open them.

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